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# **AIR TRAVEL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A CHILD: WHY DID MY MOTHER PAY FOR THIS?**

JULIA HALL

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

**I**N TODAY'S mobile society, more children are traveling on planes. These children are no longer given the special treatment seen in the past, when few children traveled on planes to begin with, and even fewer children traveled unaccompanied by an adult. The days of small plastic wings, meeting the pilot, and trips to see the cockpit are gone. Rather, children traveling on planes are no longer a novelty, but are usually treated as (and often are) seasoned travelers. As a result, these children face hazardous and difficult situations, in which the provisions made by the airlines for these passengers are inadequate to protect the children from harmful circumstances.

This article discusses the hazards faced by children traveling unaccompanied, the current policies the airlines have established, the areas of exposure that the airlines face based on the inadequacy of their policies, and a brief suggestion of how to minimize this potential liability. This article also discusses air travel from the perspective of a child generally. There are several areas in which the relative age, size, and capabilities of a child expose them to greater potential harm. This article attempts to identify and address these areas. It discusses the current policies the airlines have established in order to cover these areas and also suggests some additional policies the airlines should establish in order to avoid liability.

## **II. CHILDREN TRAVELING UNACCOMPANIED**

For a variety of reasons, such as the greater incidence of divorced families or Grandma and Grandpa retiring to a sunny part of the country, children are traveling by themselves quite frequently. Out of the six hundred million passengers on planes in 1997, an estimated seven million were children travel-

ing alone.<sup>1</sup> The statistics for 1998 and 1999 show a similar trend.<sup>2</sup> The rising number of children traveling has created the need for the airlines to develop policies and procedures regarding the special needs of these passengers.

Generally, the airlines consider children between the ages of five and eleven to be minors who are eligible to travel unaccompanied. Children between the ages of five and seven may not travel on a flight in which they are required to change planes, and children between the ages of eight and eleven are provided with some type of escort service when they travel on a flight in which they are required to change planes.<sup>3</sup> However, the services that the airlines provide and the actual adherence to the stated policies depends on the airline, the individual employees, and the facilities provided at different airports.

Although the airline services vary regarding the travel of unaccompanied minors, the majority of the airlines have recently started charging an additional fee for these children. The fees generally range from thirty to sixty dollars—a shock to many parents who were expecting to pay a reduced youth fare, or at least the normal fare for their children. This presents interesting questions, however, because if the airlines feel that the services they are providing to these children are such that they merit additional compensation, what exactly is the service and the extent of the service that the airline is agreeing to provide?

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<sup>1</sup> Dana Hawkins, *Stranded? But You're Only 5—Going Home Alone is Daunting for Kids*, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, July 20, 1998, at 58.

<sup>2</sup> According to a recent Associated Press article, although neither the Department of Transportation nor the Federal Aviation Administration keep statistics on the number of children flying unaccompanied, a DOT spokesman stated that “estimates range widely from a half-million to 7 million children a year.” Kathleen Prentice, *Precious Cargo: When Your Child Flies Solo What You Need to Know That Airlines Might Not Tell You*, APBNEWS.COM, (Dec. 15, 1999), at [http://www.apbnews.com/safetycenter/specialreport/kidsfly1215\\_01.html](http://www.apbnews.com/safetycenter/specialreport/kidsfly1215_01.html). Neither the estimated number of unaccompanied children nor the statistics of parents’ complaints about the problems their children faced are part of the consumer report issued by the DOT, and the statistics are not readily available. See U.S. DEPT. OF TRANSP., AIR TRAVEL CONSUMER REPORT, at <http://www.dot.gov/airconsumer/> (last visited July 1, 2001). After numerous attempts to locate these statistics, the Air Transport Authority told the author that these statistics must be kept by an informal count, and they were not able to find them.

<sup>3</sup> See Toni Stroud, *Alone on Airline Travel: Carriers Take Extra Steps to Safeguard Kids Flying by Themselves*, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER, July 25, 1999, at J03.

## A. HAZARDS FACED BY CHILDREN TRAVELING UNACCOMPANIED

1. *Hazards Faced As a Result of Relaxed Supervision*

Obviously, it is not possible for a child traveling unaccompanied to be supervised at all times by the airline. The flight attendants and gate agents, on whom the duty of supervision rests, have other duties and passengers to whom they must be available as well. Todd Curtis, of Airsafe.com, remarked that when unaccompanied children have to change planes, “kids can get lost in the system. If [children] have to wait between connections and some ticket agent is responsible for them and gets busy, [the agent’s] first line of duty is to the customers in line, *not to the kids*.”<sup>4</sup> In their customer service plan, Southwest Airlines states that while they intend to “provide the best possible service to unaccompanied minor children and their families and friends,” they will strive to provide this service “*without detracting from the service we must make available to all of our Customers*.”<sup>5</sup> This quote seems to reflect the attitude projected by the airlines: forgetting that these unaccompanied children are customers too—customers who have paid an additional fare in order to be supervised by the airlines.

This relaxed supervision can be dangerous. David Stempler, the president of the Airline Travelers Association (a passengers’ association) told a reporter that “[t]here are all kinds of problems with unaccompanied minors. The biggest problem is when kids are transferring planes. A gate agent is supposed to be watching them, and the gate agents are very busy.”<sup>6</sup> Active children have taken advantage of this relaxed supervision and have created horror stories that likely have scared their parents out of ever allowing them to travel alone.

For example, instead of waiting for the flight attendant to escort her off the plane, one seven-year-old girl traveling from San Francisco to Denver walked off the plane with everyone else and walked all the way out of the gate without anyone noticing. Her grandmother voiced a very realistic concern, that even though “[h]er parents were right there . . . if they had been late, who

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<sup>4</sup> Prentice, *supra* note 2 (emphasis added).

<sup>5</sup> Southwest Airlines, *Customer Service Commitment* 13 (2001) [hereinafter *Southwest Customer Service*], available at [http://www.southwest.com/about\\_swa/customer\\_service\\_commitment/customer\\_service\\_commitment.html](http://www.southwest.com/about_swa/customer_service_commitment/customer_service_commitment.html) (emphasis added).

<sup>6</sup> Andrea Passalacqua, *When Airlines ‘Bump’ Kids, It’s Flight of Fear for Parents*, *NEWSDAY*, Mar. 1, 1998, at A31.

knows what would have happened. They looked around for somebody to sign out from, and they couldn't find anybody so they just left."<sup>7</sup> United Airlines, the airline in this case, has an official policy of having a flight attendant escort the child to the person listed as being the responsible party for picking the child up; however, obviously, some children do slip through the cracks.<sup>8</sup>

A recent Internet posting on an airline complaint website told of another unaccompanied minor slipping through the cracks of United's policy. A fourteen-year-old traveling from Illinois to Virginia ran into difficulty when the plane was grounded at Dulles. Since there were no more seats available, the ticket agent's solution was to send the child in a taxi to a different airport, where the taxi driver left the child in the parking lot. No one from United notified the parents of the change in plans.<sup>9</sup>

This article does not mean to suggest that the dangerous situations that children face are concentrated in any one airline. Delta Airlines, for example, has a policy similar to the policy of United Airlines mentioned above, but nine-year-old Robert Trubee slipped through their established policy as well. Robert was told by his mother to "sit quietly at the gate and do exactly as the Delta attendants said."<sup>10</sup> After the plane on which he was supposed to be a passenger took off, the gate attendant noticed that he was still patiently waiting for his escort to put him on the plane.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps the most familiar case is that of the six-year-old child flying on Northwest Airlines. When his flight was cancelled, Northwest Airlines put him in a hotel room for the night.<sup>12</sup> Northwest's policy when children are stranded is to contact the parents, and then provide hotel accommodations for the child with a same-sex guard posted outside the door. In this instance, Northwest put the six-year-old child in a hotel room with a fourteen-year-old roommate, who molested the younger child for several hours.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *See id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Posting of rlearoby to* <http://www.epinions.com/trvl> (Jan. 24, 2000) (copy on file with author).

<sup>10</sup> Hawkins, *supra* note 1.

<sup>11</sup> *See id.*

<sup>12</sup> Karen Schwartz, *For Kids Traveling Alone, Airlines Take on Role of Babysitter*, ASSOC. PRESS, Mar. 1, 1997, available at <http://www.lubbockonline.com/news/030197/forkids.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> *See id.*

Northwest's policy of putting children together in a hotel room does not on its face seem extremely dangerous, and in fact was not criticized by John Rabun, the vice president of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.<sup>14</sup> The argument that the parents of this child certainly raised is that it is very reasonable to expect an airline to anticipate that unaccompanied minors may be stranded overnight, and provide accommodations for a child that are safe and supervised, especially when the airline is charging an additional fee to provide this type of service. Although most of the airlines do have a policy that unaccompanied minors are not allowed to take the last flight of the day; clearly, weather conditions often cause flights to be canceled that are not the last flight out.

Reoccurrence of these situations does not seem unlikely or improbable. Although it is not possible for the airline to supervise the children completely, if children are able to place themselves in situations that could result in serious danger, it seems reasonable to expect the airlines to recognize the potential harm and provide a system that makes these situations unlikely.

## 2. *Hazards Faced with Respect to Other Passengers*

If the flight attendants are busy or otherwise occupied, the other passengers may often find themselves forced to help or supervise the children. Many travelers will likely relate to the problem of sitting next to a young unaccompanied passenger who needs to be entertained (or restrained). The passengers in this situation are in essence forced to provide the service that the airline is receiving additional funds to provide.

This may be slightly annoying for the adult passengers who are sitting near the unaccompanied minors; however, to a predatory mind, this could also create an opportunity to abuse or harm the child. Adults often struggle with the awkwardness of an annoying or inconsiderate seatmate and do not always know the proper way to handle these situations; however, they generally have the social skills to protect themselves from a seatmate who is acting in an inappropriate manner. This can be much more difficult for a child, and has some serious and frightening aspects to be considered as well.

For instance, if a child is sitting next to an adult who is a child molester or abuser, what is the child's defense against this per-

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<sup>14</sup> Regarding Northwest Airlines' policy, Mr. Rabun stated, "There are some times we have to say, 'As adults, you just can't think of everything.'" *Id.*

son? The child passenger may not be aware that the adult's behavior is inappropriate, and even if the child does realize this, it may be difficult to alert the flight attendant to the situation. On a full flight, the flight attendant may not be able to answer the child's page promptly, and even once the page is answered, the child faces the problem of having to discuss in front of his seatmate the reason why he called the flight attendant.

Although the Department of Transportation reports that it has received no complaints of this nature from parents of unaccompanied minors,<sup>15</sup> a teenage girl who suffered severe depression after being molested by a male passenger during a flight brought a recent case against KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. The British Court of Appeal denied her claim for damages, and stated that the experience was an example of the "special risk inherent in air travel."<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, pessimistic though it might sound, it seems rational to assume that since the opportunity for this situation to occur is present, it is very likely that it has.<sup>17</sup> In fact, British Airways has had the policy for over ten years of not seating unaccompanied minors next to male passengers for this very reason.<sup>18</sup> Children are taught that if an adult does or says inappropriate things, they should get away and tell an adult.<sup>19</sup> On

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<sup>15</sup> Bill Mosely, a spokesman for the DOT, was quoted in APNews.com as stating that "Our files contained no complaints indicating assaults, molestation or other criminal behavior." Prentice, *supra* note 2. This seems unlikely. As discussed previously, the DOT does not list the complaints received regarding service provided to children in their report of consumer complaints. So, it seems logical to assume that these statistics are not given as high a priority as, for example, lost baggage (complaints regarding lost baggage are part of the consumer report). Further, the parents or guardians likely send their complaints to the airlines first, and if they receive satisfaction there, would have no reason to contact the DOT. The airlines have a huge public relations incentive to keep these parents happy (and quiet) regarding these horrible incidents. Finally, Nancy McBride, executive director of the Florida branch of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children stated that "We've had complaints from parents about situations where fondling has gone on. When kids are strapped into a seat, it's not like they can run away from what's going on." *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Girl Loses Case Over Plane Sex Attack*, TIMES (London), May 18, 2001, at 5.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Schwartz of The Associated Press reports that only a few incidents involving unaccompanied minors were reported in news articles, among which was the instance of a nine-year-old girl being molested by her male seatmate. Schwartz, *supra* note 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Men, Lone Children Can't Mix on Planes*, GLOBE & MAIL, Apr. 7, 2001, available at 04/07/2001 Globe & Mail (Toronto Can.), at T9 (Westlaw).

<sup>19</sup> See generally Donna Ferguson, *Your Guide to Child Protection* (1998), at <http://www.designm.com/protectkids>.

an airplane, the child cannot get away, and may not be able to find a reliable adult to tell if the flight is full and the flight attendants are not able to respond.

### 3. *Hazards Faced from Tenuous Nature of Travel*

As frequent travelers are aware, mechanical problems and weather play an important role in air travel, and sometimes the most carefully and cautiously created travel plans are upset. This leaves open the potential situation of children being stranded in airports for hours or even overnight.

When unaccompanied children are left in these situations, it is easy to imagine the potential dangers they face. On the plane, they are at least in a contained area, and although the problems of inadequate supervision faced on the plane are discussed above, the problems of inadequate supervision in an airport or a hotel are much greater. If the layover in the airport is for several hours, even the most mature child is likely to become bored and frustrated. The opportunities for children to slip through the cracks in a busy and crowded airport (often in the company of disgruntled and worried adults) are very high.

Children who are forced to spend the night in a strange city are faced with difficult situations as well. TWA reported that in 1997 children were forced to stay overnight in St. Louis alone "two to three nights a week."<sup>20</sup> For a five-year-old child (the age at which most airlines allow a child to travel unaccompanied), the prospect of spending the night alone in a hotel is full of potential dangers. Older children may be more used to caring for themselves, but still may need assistance that the airline is unable to provide, let alone the opportunity this situation provides to persons of a predatory nature to harm the children.

## B. CURRENT POLICIES OF THE AIRLINES REGARDING UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Although the proposed Airline Passengers Bill of Rights and the Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act suggested that the Secretary of Transportation study the adequacy of airline policies regarding unaccompanied minors, and that these policies be standardized, there are currently no industry standards or laws regarding airline supervision of unaccompanied minors.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hawkins, *supra* note 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*; see Airline Passengers Bill of Rights/Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act, H.R. 752, 106th Cong. (1999).



The recent announcement by the airlines of the addition of some of the terms of their consumer protection plans submitted in 1999 to the consumer contracts seems to have at least delayed any legislative action in the near future.<sup>22</sup>

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) publish several informational pamphlets for parents and guardians; however, it is difficult to find any current regulations imposed on the airlines regarding the travel of unaccompanied minors.<sup>23</sup> According to Bill Mosley, a DOT spokesman quoted in a *Newsday* article, some type of policy does exist regarding regulations for unaccompanied minors. Mr. Mosley is quoted as saying, for example, that the "[a]irlines are required to have a policy on which passengers they would tend to bump. In most cases, they would bump almost anyone else before they would bump an unaccompanied child."<sup>24</sup>

As the previous situations have shown, however, some unaccompanied children are bumped and, as a result, have been exposed to harmful situations.

### 1. Age Limitations

Generally, the airlines have some similarly structured policies and systems. The airlines consider a minor to be a child between the ages of five and eleven.<sup>25</sup> Most airlines do not allow children between the ages of five and seven to take a flight in which they will have to change planes.<sup>26</sup> Some airlines will allow five- to seven-year-olds to take non-stop and direct flights, while some airlines allow these children to take direct flights only.<sup>27</sup> Children from ages eight to twelve can take flights in which they have to change planes. Surprisingly, children over twelve are considered adults for the purposes of the airlines and, as such,

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<sup>22</sup> Charles Ornstein, *Airline Executives Offer Assurances: Carriers Vow to Improve Customer Service*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, June 8, 2001, at 1D; Keith L. Alexander, *Passenger Rights Expanded; Airlines' Vow is Effort to Head off New Law*, WASHINGTON POST, June 8, 2001, at E01.

<sup>23</sup> See Federal Aviation Administration, *Kids and Teens Flying Alone* (date unknown) (copy on file with author).

<sup>24</sup> Passalacqua, *supra* note 6.

<sup>25</sup> Stroud, *supra* note 3.

<sup>26</sup> See *id.*

<sup>27</sup> The difference between non-stop flights and direct flights is that a non-stop flight lands only at the final destination. A direct flight lands at other airports but does not involve a change of planes before reaching the final destination.

may accompany another child (ages *one* and up), eliminating the requirement of airline supervision for *both* children.<sup>28</sup>

The airlines impose these age limitations based on their policy decision that children ages twelve and older are capable of traveling without the services provided to younger children. Some of the airlines do provide the same services to unaccompanied children ages twelve and older upon the request of the parents (and, of course, still impose the same additional fee).<sup>29</sup> If this additional service is not requested, the child is treated just as an adult would be—which means the child is subject to being “bumped, rebooked, or put on other flights when scheduling conflicts arise.”<sup>30</sup> As might be expected, parents do not necessarily consider their twelve-year-old children to be as capable as an adult in any of the above situations.<sup>31</sup>

## 2. Fees Charged

Children between the ages of five and twelve are charged an additional fee by most of the airlines for providing the additional escort or supervisory service. For children who are taking a flight in which they have to change planes, the extra fee is to compensate the airline for the escort service they provide. On a flight in which the child is not required to change planes, it is more difficult to determine exactly what service the airline is providing for the child.<sup>32</sup> The airlines seem well aware that the service is inconsistent, at best. One flight attendant was quoted

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<sup>28</sup> See American Automobile Association, *Flying Alone* (date unknown) (copy on file with author); see also Passalacqua, *supra* note 6. A twelve-year-old girl and her ten-year-old sister were bumped from their flight home, but Pan Am did not have the children registered as minors since the older child was twelve, and as such, considered to be the responsible party for her sister. *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> See *id.*

<sup>30</sup> See Kent Fischer, *15-Year-Old Spends Hours in Airport After Being Bumped*, ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, Aug. 11, 1998, at 1.

<sup>31</sup> Kevin Hansut, the father of fifteen-year-old Tiffani, was extremely upset when Sun Jet bumped her off her return flight and she was “left to fend for herself in a bustling big-city airport.” *Id.* Because Tiffani was not considered a minor, the airline did not make any special accommodations for her, and the Sun Jet spokesman stated that their policy was no different from the industry standard: “Our airport personnel aren’t required to do anything special because she’s over the age of 13.” *Id.*; see also Margaret Bernstein, *Should Your Child Fly Alone? Learn the Rules, Trust Instincts*, STAR-TRIBUNE (Minneapolis-St. Paul), June 3, 2001, at 2G (additional examples of stranded teens).

<sup>32</sup> Gail Todd, *Passengers Steamed over Hidden Fees Charged by the Airlines*, CHI. DAILY HERALD, July 19, 1998, at 3. “The airlines admit that on a nonstop flight, which isn’t the last flight of the day, there isn’t much added expense for the airlines.” *Id.*

as saying "[i]n the summer, we often have as many as 20 unaccompanied children flying on one plane. We don't have time to give them much personal attention . . ."

Joe Pallo, the father of nine-year-old passenger Sarah, seems to communicate the feelings of most parents or guardians when he stated (in response to a reporter's question regarding the additional fare that America West had just implemented for unaccompanied minors), "It doesn't seem like it's \$30 worth of service. It's like [America West] wants to reach in my pocket and grab \$30 every time she flies."<sup>33</sup> Diane, the mother of ten-year-old passenger Conrad, echoes these feelings, stating that "[t]he price for my son's ticket to travel solo nearly doubled since last year. As a single parent, I could hardly afford it."<sup>34</sup> The feelings of these parents seem to consistently reflect the level of dissatisfaction that passengers are expressing to airlines generally regarding the lack of customer-focused service. Many other customer complaint areas were addressed by the proposed Airline Passengers Bill of Rights and the Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act; however, the airline policies regarding the travel of unaccompanied minors was not addressed in detail in either of these pieces of legislation, and no solutions were proposed.

Many of the airlines' customer service reports (made in response to the proposed Airline Passengers Bill of Rights and now included in the consumer contracts) reflect this lack of attention. The airlines have made their policies regarding unaccompanied children clear; but they have not made any improvements either. American Airlines, for example, makes the very broad assurance on their web page that "American Airlines remains responsible for the unaccompanied minor from the origination to the final destination."<sup>35</sup> They do not, however, explain exactly how they will improve their policies so that children do not slip through the cracks, or even defend their current policies.

Because a majority of the airlines are now charging between \$30 and \$60 each way for unaccompanied children, it is logical to assume that the service they are providing is quantifiable—it

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Corbett, *Amwest Loads on Fee for Unescorted Kids: Direct-Flight Charge Boosts Rate by \$30 Each Way*, ARIZ. REPUBLIC, July 19, 1999, at E1.

<sup>34</sup> Todd, *supra* note 32.

<sup>35</sup> See American Airlines Customer Service Plan, at <http://www.americanairlines.com> (last visited Feb. 19, 2000) [hereinafter American Airlines Customer Service Plan].

is \$30 to \$60 worth of service to the child.<sup>36</sup> The services that the airlines are providing should have increased with the additional cost; however, as Mr. Pallo complains, the airlines do not seem to have increased the level or extent of the service they are providing. Further, as the dangers discussed above seem to be happening not infrequently, the service that the airlines are providing is inconsistent at best.

### 3. *Services Provided*

As mentioned above, the level of service that the airlines provide varies from airline to airline. Typically, when the parent or guardian makes the airline reservation for the minor, the airline will request the information regarding the parent's name and phone numbers, and the name and phone numbers of the person who will be meeting the child.<sup>37</sup> The child is usually given some sort of identification from the airline, such as a neck tag, tote bag, or button to wear that identifies him as a "UM" (an unaccompanied minor).<sup>38</sup> A flight attendant or other airline personnel usually will pre-board the child, and will walk the child off the plane.<sup>39</sup> If the child is traveling on a flight in which he will have to change planes, airline personnel escort him to the connecting flight.<sup>40</sup> As previously discussed, the services that the airlines provide in the airport, such as waiting rooms and entertainment, varies from airline to airline, and airport to airport.

When the child reaches his final destination, the flight attendant escorts the child to the person previously identified as the person to meet the child.<sup>41</sup> Although this person must show the flight attendant identification, as previously discussed, often the busy airport and the other customers demanding the flight attendant's attention could allow the child to slip through the protection intended by this policy. These policies are in general consistently the official policies of the airlines; however, the poli-

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<sup>36</sup> See Hawkins, *supra* note 1.

<sup>37</sup> See Lisa Carden, *Guidelines to Follow for Letting Your Child Fly Alone for the First Time*, AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN, June 13, 1999, at D4.

<sup>38</sup> Canadian Airlines, for example, gives the child a pouch to wear around his neck. Ken Becker, *Precious Cargo Airlines Take Special Care of Solo Kids*, EDMONTON SUN, June 12, 1999, at 47. See also Corbett, *supra* note 33.

<sup>39</sup> See Marcia Schnedler, *It Can Be a Tough Trip When Kids Fly Alone*, TIMES UNION (Albany, N.Y.), Dec. 24, 1998, at D8.

<sup>40</sup> See *id.*

<sup>41</sup> See *id.*

cies are not always followed and, even if they are, are not always adequate to protect the child from harm.<sup>42</sup>

### C. POTENTIAL EXPOSURE OF THE AIRLINES

Because the stated policies are either inconsistently or carelessly applied, or are insufficient to protect the unaccompanied child, it seems that the airlines are exposing themselves to liability in this regard. The airlines are, as a whole, generally claiming responsibility for the children traveling under their supervision, especially in light of the fact that they have recently included their consumer protection pledges in the consumer contracts.

As previously mentioned, American Airlines, for example, even states on its web page that "American Airlines remains responsible for the unaccompanied minor from the origination to the final destination."<sup>43</sup> TWA's policy states: "On-board the aircraft, the child will be in the care of the Flight Attendant. At connection points, based on connecting time, the child will be met by a TWA representative and brought to the holding room or transferred to their connecting flight where they will again be in the care of the Flight Attendant"<sup>44</sup> When Delta Airlines announced that they would begin charging a fee for unaccompanied minors, a spokesperson stated that: "We thought the new fees more accurately reflected the service and attention that we provide. I think that they (parents) are grateful that we provide

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<sup>42</sup> According to statistics quoted by APNews.com, in 1998 the DOT received 82 complaints from parents (out of a total of 9,606 general airline complaints). In 1999, there were 116 complaints from January to October (out of a total of 17,303 general complaints). Prentice, *supra* note 2. The complaints that the DOT typically receives include the following. (1) More than a few children were bumped from reserved seats on overbooked flights, even though there were people expecting to meet them at another time and gate at the next stop. (2) It is not uncommon for children to travel unescorted even when parents arranged and paid for the escort service; some airlines refused to refund the fee even when the escort was a no-show. (3) One parent's child did not disembark at the gate that was assigned to the flight. After paging the child several times, the parent learned that the flight had arrived at a different gate, and that the child had been taken to an area designated for lost children. *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> American Airlines Customer Service Plan, *supra* note 35.

<sup>44</sup> Trans World Airlines, *Special Service Policy*, at [http://www.twa.com/passenger\\_services/ps\\_special\\_service.html](http://www.twa.com/passenger_services/ps_special_service.html) (last visited Feb. 18, 2000).

such a service. This way they know that someone is watching over their children and have someone to escort them.”<sup>45</sup>

The airlines are performing a service for which they are receiving compensation, and are claiming responsibility for the child while he is in the care of the airline. If they do not perform this service, or perform it in a way that causes these children harm, it seems logical to argue that they should be liable for the harm they caused.

From a public policy standpoint, the airlines should have a heightened duty of care towards these young passengers. Many of these children are traveling to see a parent that they are separated from because of a divorce, or perhaps are traveling to see a relative far from home, and as a result are likely to be in a stressful situation aside from travel mishaps. For these children to be exposed to harm, either emotional or physical, because of the airline failing to keep them safe, seems unfair. If the airlines are providing this service, they should be held to a standard of care based on the acknowledgement that these passengers should be receiving the additional service they paid for.

In a service-oriented industry, it seems that consumer pressure should be able to force the airlines to provide the level of service consumers are looking for. It is relatively difficult to determine exactly the amount of consumer complaints and dangerous incidents that have occurred concerning unaccompanied minors, as the airlines (for obvious reasons) do not publish the consumer complaints they receive, and the few lawsuits that have been filed seem to have been dropped.<sup>46</sup> Since it is in the obvious interest of the airlines to keep any settlement they may have reached with parents based on incidents regarding the travel of their unaccompanied children, it is also difficult to determine if the airlines are currently suffering financially from their policies.

Another factor that points to the costs that the airlines may already be incurring is the fact that the airlines are now charging a fee for the service they provide. Is this service really caus-

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<sup>45</sup> Nathan Chandler, *Ticket for Flight: Parents Pay for Peace of Mind When Purchasing Tickets for an Unaccompanied Child*, COURIER (Waterloo-Cedar Falls), June 19, 1998, available at <http://www.wfcourier.com/life98/980619parents.html>.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, although criminal charges were filed in the widely publicized case of the six-year-old boy who was molested by the fifteen-year-old while sharing a hotel room, they were subsequently dropped. See Tom Belden, *Airlines Face Rising Level of Complaints from Frustrated Passengers*, LAWMAKERS, BUFFALO NEWS, Mar. 14, 1999, at A5.

ing the airlines additional cost, or are they forced to raise the price because of the additional liability they are exposed to by these unaccompanied minor passengers?

#### D. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF CURRENT POLICY

Clearly, the current policies of the airlines are not foolproof. Children are slipping through the cracks and are faced with risks when traveling alone. The question when dealing with children always leads to the responsibilities of the parents. Is it the fault of the parents that the children discussed above were placed in harmful situations? Surely, it is the responsibility of the parent to know his or her child and to determine whether or not that child is capable of handling the contingencies of traveling alone. "Some airline experts say the heart of the problem lies not with the airlines, which often do everything by the book, but with the parents. 'Too many people are just sloughing their kids off. But . . . I think some of the gate agents need to be a whole lot more responsible,'" said Darryl Jenkins, director of the aviation institute at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.<sup>47</sup>

But even if the airlines are doing everything "by the book," are their procedures fundamentally flawed? If there are continuing problems with the services provided to minors, the airlines may decide not to allow minors to travel unaccompanied. Southwest Airlines, an airline that has not reported any problems with their unaccompanied minor travel, simply does not allow unaccompanied children to travel on flights in which they would have to change planes. Other airlines may very well trim their services back also if they are faced with liability from their escort services.

The question then seems to become whether this problem is a solvable problem or not. Are the risks that children face inherent, based on their age and maturity? Could the airlines change their policies to protect these passengers from the risks that they face?

The proposed Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act included a small mention of the need for the DOT to conduct a study to determine if the airlines' policies for unaccompanied minors were sufficient, and suggested that each airline make its policies clear. After looking at some of the airlines' customer service plans, it seems that they all feel their policies are adequate as

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<sup>47</sup> Passalacqua, *supra* note 6.

they are. Since this problem will not be fixed legislatively, at least any time soon, it seems that the airlines themselves will be able to decide whether or not to provide these children with an adequate level of service when they travel unaccompanied in the care of the airline.<sup>48</sup>

One possible solution might be to hire airline employees specifically to escort and supervise these children. As it is now, a flight attendant or gate agent is given the responsibility for supervising these children, and harm to the children seems to be largely a result of these employees having demands from their other responsibilities. It seems that having an employee whose only duty was to supervise these children would minimize the risks these children face from having the attention of the flight attendant or gate agent diverted by other passengers.

Because the airlines have not had parents take them to court without settling the case, it may be financially "prudent" to continue to settle with the parents whose children are harmed from airline carelessness. Hiring additional employees to bear the responsibility of supervising these children may be more expensive than just quietly settling the cases as they arise. However, this seems like a dangerous position for the airlines to feel comfortable in. It is only a matter of time before some parent will want to have his or her cause heard and refuse to settle.

Even aside from the potential danger of litigation, it also seems that airlines have a heightened responsibility to provide a safe and reliable level of service to all of their passengers. Hiring additional employees to supervise the children may pose additional cost to the airlines. But if that would take away the risks faced by the children, don't the airlines have an obligation to do so? The additional cost would be passed on to the passenger, and many parents would likely become upset about the additional costs. However, the airlines are already charging a substantial fee for the very low level of services they are providing, and surely some of the fee already being charged could be appropriated to hiring additional employees.

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<sup>48</sup> When thinking about a legislative solution, the author wondered what level of service existed before the Airline Deregulation Act. Because there weren't nearly as many children flying and because most of the flights were direct flights (the hub and spoke system was developed after airline deregulation), it seems that the airlines were able to pay a great deal of attention to their younger passengers. The "horror stories" of children flying alone simply do not seem to exist before airline deregulation.



### III. RISKS OF CHILDREN GENERALLY

As a result of the differences between children and adults in their relative age, size, and capacity, even children traveling with an adult face risks that the airlines have not made provisions for. The seats and safety belts on the plane are designed for adults, not children. Many aspects of travel, such as ticketless travel and metal detectors, do not take into account the different qualities of children (such as not having identification that would allow them to travel ticketless, and the fact that they must walk through the metal detector alone, allowing a deviant personality an opportunity snatch them away from their parent). The airlines and the airports should consider these areas of risk and implement alternative and safe methods to accommodate these passengers, especially if they wish to avoid government intervention.

#### A. HAZARDS CHILDREN FACE AS A RESULT OF THEIR AGE, SIZE, AND CAPACITY, AND CURRENT AIRLINE POLICIES

##### 1. *Safety Seats for Children*

Perhaps the area of safety in air travel for children that has received the most media attention is the topic of safety seats for children. Currently, the seats in the aircraft are designed for adults: the headrests and safety belts are designed to protect adult bodies. A recent article in *The Detroit News* recounts an incident that could have resulted in great harm to a small child.

When Lorrie Walker's flight hit turbulence en route to Orlando, Fla., the flight attendants quickly gathered up paper cups and trash and left only one item unbuckled on the plane—a 2-year-old. She watched in dismay as the girl's father directed her to "make friends" with another child after she squirmed out of his arms into the aisle. "Both mother and father smiled as she pitched and stumbled, being righted by other concerned passengers who tried to secure her with their hands," Walker said.<sup>49</sup>

The article quoted the letter of the project administrator for the Pennsylvania Traffic Injury Prevention Project to the FAA as saying: "If Styrofoam cups need to be secured, why would we think any less of a child? If we look only at other passengers, we

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<sup>49</sup> Lisa Zagaroli, *Child Safety Seats on Planes are Eyed*, GANNETT NEWS SERVICE, Jan. 4, 1999, available at 1999 WL 6960131.

know that they would be protected from a child who became a projectile in turbulence.”<sup>50</sup>

According to the article, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommended that children have safety seats on aircraft “due to evidence and research that adults are physically incapable of maintaining hold of a child in severe turbulence or a crash.”<sup>51</sup> The article quoted FAA spokeswoman Alison Duquette as stating that of the nine deaths of children under age two between 1978 and 1994, five were deemed preventable if child restraints had been used.<sup>52</sup> FAA information on child safety states that “Children weighing under 40 pounds are safest when sitting in a certified child restraint system—a rear-facing infant seat for those under 20 pounds and a forward-facing child safety seat for those 20-40 pounds.”<sup>53</sup>

No caretaker of children today would consider putting a small child in an automobile without a car seat. The impact that a child could be exposed to in a car is too hazardous to even think about not buckling them in. It seems that the potential impact that children could be exposed to on an airplane is so much greater that any logical person would assume a safety seat would be required for children on planes as well.

Unfortunately, the airlines encourage parents not to use safety seats on the plane by allowing “lap children” to fly free.<sup>54</sup> Parents (already discouraged, no doubt, by the additional fees they are paying for their older children to fly alone) are not given any incentives to carry a heavy and cumbersome seat for their child on the plane, especially when the reward for all of that inconvenience is having to pay for an additional ticket. The life of a child should not be unnecessarily risked for a few dollars, and the airlines should not encourage this unsafe behavior with price breaks.

## 2. *Security Procedures*

Another area in which the airlines (and airport architects and designers) have ignored the needs of their small passengers is in the security checkpoints. Parents or caregivers are not allowed to walk with their children through the metal detectors. During

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<sup>50</sup> *See id.*

<sup>51</sup> *See id.*

<sup>52</sup> *See id.*

<sup>53</sup> *Child Safety Seats: Airplane Safety*, at <http://www.faa.gov/childinfo.htm> (last visited Feb. 18, 2000).

<sup>54</sup> *See* Appendix, Table 2, for airline fare policies regarding safety seats.

a calm day, this does not pose a problem, as the caregiver can watch the child walk through. Imagine, however, the hectic times of holiday travel, when there is a huge line to walk through the security checkpoint. Handbags and laptop computers can be stolen from airport baggage conveyor belts, especially during the busy holiday season. How easy it would be for a small child to get lost in the shuffle, or worse, fall into the hands of a person who could harm them.

The Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act suggested a re-evaluation of security checkpoints for this very reason. Children and their caregivers should be able to walk through the metal detector together. The Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act, in fact, suggested that children ages two and under should not be forced to walk through the metal detectors alone.<sup>55</sup> This is a customer service issue that (as yet) has not been addressed by the airlines' customer service plans.

### 3. *Administrative Procedures*

The airlines currently ignore several other areas of service that can prove difficult for children because of their age, size, and capacity. One rather obvious example is in the area of ticketing. Many airlines are moving towards "ticketless travel"—and even offer price breaks for customers who travel this way. Usually, ticketless travel involves booking the flight over the phone and then simply showing identification at the ticket window instead of having to present a ticket. For children, this poses a difficulty—children do not normally have any type of identification that they carry on a normal basis. If a child wants to travel "ticketless," she must either have a copy of her birth certificate or some other type of identification. This is inconvenient, at the very least.

Another area of administrative inconvenience for children (and perhaps more accurately for their caregivers flying with them) is boarding. When a child is traveling unaccompanied, he usually is allowed to board early along with the other passengers who may need extra time to be seated. Parents or guardians with small children used to be allowed to pre-board as well;

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<sup>55</sup> According to a summary prepared by the Air Transport Association of the changes the Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act would have affected, the Act would include "[a]n assurance that a child younger than 2 years will not be separated from a parent or guardian during security screening." Air Transport Association, at <http://www.air-transport.org/public/industry/16.asp> (last visited Feb. 18, 2000).

however, many airlines are now taking this privilege away.<sup>56</sup> Delta Airlines, for example, has eliminated pre-boarding for families because they found that there was usually a "mass of people at the door claiming to need extra assistance."<sup>57</sup>

Although some of the airlines do try to allow pre-boarding if the passenger specifically requests it, even passengers who request to pre-board are allowed to do so only if there is time.<sup>58</sup> Parents are obviously frustrated by having this accommodation taken away. Kathy Bernstein, a mother of two, expressed her frustration to *The Wall Street Journal*. Ms. Bernstein said that without the pre-boarding accommodation, when she has to board with her children "you're hitting first-class passengers in the head. I've never had a flight attendant help me. It's a nightmare."<sup>59</sup>

The relatively new carry-on baggage limitation also poses additional inconveniences to children. Because there are so many children traveling now, or perhaps in an attempt to cut costs, the airlines do not provide many of the "extras" they used to give to children. Small plastic wings, decks of cards, and *Highlights Magazine* are no longer readily available. Parents or guardians now have to bring anything and everything their children might need for entertainment along with them. Many of the airlines suggest in their "tips for traveling with small children" that parents pack all of these types of items along with them.<sup>60</sup> Juliett Giardano, a frustrated mother who packs Play-Doh, Hot Wheels, and crayons to entertain her child, said she has "learned not to expect anything from airlines."<sup>61</sup>

The airlines also do not provide much in the area of "kid-friendly" food. United Airlines, for example, offers ten different meals for passengers with special needs; however, they provide one choice for kids: a happy meal that must be requested in

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<sup>56</sup> See Appendix, Table 3, for list of services some airlines provide regarding pre-boarding and additional child-friendly services.

<sup>57</sup> Wendy Bounds & Lauren Lipton, *Mom, the Airlines Don't Like Me*, WALL ST. J., Feb. 11, 2000, at W1.

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *Id.* at W10.

<sup>60</sup> United Airlines suggests that parents "bring your child's favorite toy, coloring books, and storybooks. We also recommend that you give your child something to eat or drink when the plane is taking off and landing. This may help alleviate ear pain caused by the pressure as the cabin adjusts to the altitude." United Airlines, *Children*, at <http://www.ual.com/site/primary/0,10017,1050,00.html> (last visited Feb. 18, 2000).

<sup>61</sup> Bounds & Lipton, *supra* note 57, at W10.

advance.<sup>62</sup> A parent who does not want to have to handle a child who is bouncing off the walls in a junk-food-induced frenzy must, once again, pack themselves a nutritious meal for their child. Again, the carry-on limit is difficult for a parent or a guardian who is forced to carry on entertainment and food for their child.

Perhaps the most important carry-on for small children is the safety seat. As previously discussed, the safety seat is absolutely essential to protect the child from impact; however, the airlines do not provide these seats to the parents. These seats must be carried on the airplane, causing yet another burden for these already heavily laden parents. If the parents have not purchased a seat for their child, they may be asked to check this safety seat when they get on the plane. So a parent, assuming that there may be an empty seat for their child, and trying to avoid the extra cost, may be rewarded for their efforts by being forced to check that heavy seat after all.<sup>63</sup>

#### B. POTENTIAL EXPOSURE FOR THE AIRLINES

Arguing for liability in these areas seems a harder argument. The security and administrative issues seem to be more inconveniences than areas in which the airlines should be held liable. However, the recent tide of public opinion that pushed the Airline Passengers Fair Treatment Act suggests that consumer pressure may force the airlines to review and improve customer service. An airline that made an effort to accommodate parents and children would likely gain good public relations benefits.

The area of safety seats may soon be resolved by the FAA mandating their use for children forty pounds and under. Airlines that change their policies now would have the advantage of not having to change later and perhaps could have more control in the entire process. Obviously, if the FAA mandates the use of safety seats, any airline that does not follow the mandate will be liable.

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<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> Southwest Airlines' Customer Service Policy reads: "Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that a seat will be available if your infant or toddler is not included in your reservations as a confirmed member of your party. In some cases, car-seats for unconfirmed infants and toddlers must be checked." *Southwest Customer Service*, *supra* note 5, at 13.

## C. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

This article does not presume to know the way to satisfy every concern parents or guardians may have when traveling with small children. Admittedly, traveling with children will always be challenging. However, it seems that the level of service that the airlines offer could be improved to make travel with children less challenging.

For example, it seems that the security screening process could be altered in a way to allow children under two to walk through the metal detector with their parent or guardian. Changing this process does not seem to pose a great deal of difficulty and does not seem to compromise safety either.

The administrative difficulties that children face may be more challenging to remedy. Ticketless travel, for example, could be dangerous if the passenger did not have to show any identification to prove who he was. Perhaps identification from the parent could be enough to satisfy the requirement; or perhaps the airlines could pre-issue identification for children to use. If the airlines issued identification, they would also solve the problem of proving the child's age (that is often required if the child does not look her age—if the child looks younger than five, the airlines may not let the child fly without proof of age).

Pre-boarding for families with children may cause some frustration for the airlines, but surely the benefit to the parents outweighs this frustration. If the families are not allowed to pre-board, they face a great deal of frustration themselves and may hold the entire boarding process up, causing other passengers to become frustrated as well. This seems a small concession for the airlines to make and would likely result in happier passengers all around.

The carry-on limitation is probably not something that can (or will) be changed. However, if the airlines can provide different meals for passengers with special needs, it seems only fair that they include children in this list and offer child-friendly meals that are nutritious as well. It also does not seem impossible for the airlines to have some toys and books on board either. This would likely result in a benefit to all passengers—happily entertained children would make flying a good experience for everyone around them as well.

Soon, safety seats for children under forty pounds may be a requirement. If so, the airlines could provide these seats to parents—and even charge a rental fee, if necessary. Most parents

would be more than happy to pay a small rental fee in exchange for not having to lug these heavy seats through the airport. Rental car companies rent child seats already; it does not seem that this would be difficult for airlines to do, either.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The question that this article seems to raise is that because the airlines are a service industry, why haven't these problems been fixed by consumer pressure? After all, more and more children are traveling every year. More children are traveling unaccompanied every year, too. Doesn't it seem logical that the airlines would be competing for this business by providing more child friendly services? Michael Allen, the head of an aviation information business, Back Associates, Inc., told *The Wall Street Journal* that the airlines could not win "by doing bad things to children."<sup>64</sup> Mr. Allen expressed the feeling of many parents, stating that an airline that catered to children "would 'have my business in a second.'"<sup>65</sup>

So why haven't the airlines made policies that catered to children? Some airlines have; international airlines in particular provide many services to children, and actually have forced some U.S. airlines to be more child-friendly on their international flights. Dean Breest of Air France stated that "[y]oung travelers are the future business travelers, and I don't know any company that wouldn't bend over backwards to make sure they have a good experience."<sup>66</sup>

One answer is that although children are making up more of the passenger list now, they are not the biggest revenue source for the airlines. A Paine Webber airline analyst stated that children make up only five to six percent of airline revenue.<sup>67</sup> "Airline executives don't sit around thinking about how to improve the travel experience of the average adolescent . . . [a]nd I'm not sure they should," stated the airline analyst.<sup>68</sup>

Surely the airlines should not provide extensive services to a class of passengers that do not make up enough of their overall revenue to make it profitable. But surely not all airline analysts would agree with Mr. Buttrick's statement. Looking at the reve-

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<sup>64</sup> Bounds & Lipton, *supra* note 57, at W10.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> *Id.*

<sup>67</sup> *See id.*

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*

nues from children alone may not be an accurate picture; these children have parents who also may be potential passengers (first- or business-class passengers, actually). An airline that made an effort to make children happy would gain a positive public relations reputation, and it seems logical to assume that the bottom line would reflect this.

Revenue and profit margins aside, the public policy arguments for airlines to improve on their current policies and treatment of children are very strong. Children traveling unaccompanied are often traveling under situations that are stressful (such as being shuttled between divorced parents). These children deserve to be protected from harmful and stressful situations during their travel time. The fee that the airlines are charging should provide the children with the service their parents are paying for.

If the airlines do not either change their policies, or make their current policies more careful and consistent, it seems likely that either government intervention or private liability will be the result. The airlines recently avoided the government intervention by writing their own customer service commitments; however, since their policies regarding children have not (on the whole) been changed significantly, they may not avoid government intervention forever.

As is clear by the charts in the appendix, international airlines are providing more services to children. Competition for international flights has forced U.S. airlines to be more child-friendly on international flights, and providing these additional services does not seem to have caused any large problems for the airlines. This seems to indicate that is indeed possible for the airlines to provide better services for children, and some pressure (whether it is government imposition, the threat of civil liability, or simply consumer pressure) will likely result in improved services in the future. Hopefully, this improved service will not have to be at the cost of harm to children in the meantime.



APPENDIX<sup>69</sup>

Table 1: Unaccompanied Minor Services

Airline	Service Provided/Fees
American Airlines	Ages 5 to 11 may travel alone; ages 5 to 7 direct or through flights only; ages 8 to 11 may make connections. A "service fee will be assessed" for all unaccompanied children on all flights.
America West	Ages 5 to 11 may travel alone; ages 5 to 7 direct flights only; ages 8 to 11 may make connections. \$30 fee each way.
Continental	Ages 5 to 14 may travel alone; ages 5 to 7 direct flights only; ages 8 to 14 may make connections. \$30 fee for direct flight each way; \$60 fee with one connection.
Delta	Ages 5 to 11 may travel alone; 8 and older may make connections. \$30 fee each way; \$60 fee for connections.
Northwest	Ages 5 to 14 may travel alone on non-stop or connecting flights. \$30 fee each way; \$60 with one connection.
Southwest	Ages 5 to 11 may travel alone on direct flights only. No fee.
Trans World Airlines	Ages 5 to 14 may travel alone; ages 5 to 7 may make TWA connections; ages 8 to 14 may make connections with other airlines. \$30 fee each way; \$60 with connections.
United Airlines	Ages 5 to 11 may travel alone; ages 5 to 7 on nonstop only; ages 8 to 11 may make connections. \$30 fee each way; no additional fee for connections.
USAirways	Ages 5 to 11 may travel alone; 8 and older may make connections. \$30 fee each way; \$60 fee with one connection.
Air Canada	Ages 5 to 11 may travel alone; "nominal fees may apply."
British Airways	No fee; discounted rates.
El Al	No fee; discounted rates.
Japan Airlines	No fee; ages 3 to 5 pay adult fare; ages 5 to 12 pay 33% discounted fare.
Virgin Atlantic Airways	No fee; discounted fare.

<sup>69</sup> Information compiled from the airlines' web sites, and based on a chart created by Wendy Bounds and Lauren Lipton. See Bounds & Lipton, *supra* note 57, at W10.

Table 2: Fares and Safety Seats

Airline	Service Provided/Fees
America West	Lap child under 2 free; one infant per ticketed passenger 12 years or older is allowed; in safety seat only if ticket has been purchased.
Continental	Lap child under 2 free; in safety seat 50% off adult fare.
Delta	Lap child under 2 free; in safety seat 50% off adult fare.
Northwest	Lap child under 2 free; in safety seat 50% off adult fare.
Southwest	Lap child under 2 free; in safety seat "deeply discounted" fare; 2 to 11, child fares; 12 to 21, youth fares.
United Airlines	Lap child under 2 free; in safety seat 50% off adult fare.
USAirways	Lap child under 2 free; in safety seat 50% off adult fare.
Air Canada	Lap child under 2 free for North America flights; 10% of adult fare for International and Southern flights; youth fares range from 50% to 90% of adult fare.
British Airways	Lap child under 2 90% off adult fare; ages 2 to 11, 1/3 to 50% off; ages 12 and up, adult fare.
El Al	Lap child under 2 free, first child under 12, 25% off adult fare; second child, 50% off, third and up 75% off.
Japan Airlines	Lap child under 2 90% off adult fare; child up to age 12, 33% off adult fare; 12 and older, adult fare.
Virgin Atlantic Airways	Lap child under 2 90% off adult fare; ages 2 to 11, 25% adult fare; over 12, adult fare.

Table 3: Other Services

Airline	Pre-boarding Announcement	Special Services for Children
Continental	Yes	Young travelers club in some airports for unaccompanied children. Meals for children; international flights provide infant meals and bassinets.
Delta	No; preboarding by request only if time permits	Special children's meals.
Northwest	Yes	Trading cards with picture of plane and statistics. Bottle warming on request
Southwest	Yes	In-flight activity kits; jungle gyms at gate in larger airports.
Trans World Airlines	Yes	Children's meal provided on request; children are served first; bassinets provided; gate delivery of strollers.
United Airlines	No	McDonald's Happy Meal with 24-hour advance notice; bottle warming on request; international flights provide infant meals and some special children's meals if preordered.
USAirways	Yes	Baby food available; transatlantic flights provide child kit.
Air Canada	Yes	"Skyriders" club includes: A books and games library, children's magazines, visits to the cockpit, a special children's audio channel and YTV video during peak summer months; special meals for children and infants.
British Airways	Yes	Children eat first; one designated crewmember for children on each plane; bulkhead mounted bassinets or toddler seats; children's television programs on long flights.
El Al	Yes	Children's audio channel; coloring books; crayons; books; toys on every flight; children's meals and baby food; some planes have television monitors on every seat with programming for children.
Japan Airlines	Yes	Activity packs that include origami paper; infants get "JAL Baby Cruise" pack that includes a bib, baby food, and a spoon.
Virgin Atlantic Airways	Yes	Child safety seats provided at no extra charge; children's movies, video games, and ice cream; children get backpack with magazine, books, baseball hat, and sunglasses.

## **Casenote**

