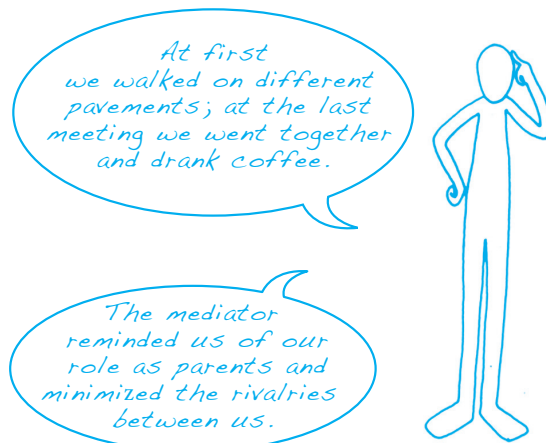


- The mediator will give you all practical information relating to the mediation process; this will be done by telephone or during an initial meeting held for that purpose;
- with the assistance of the mediator, you will evaluate if mediation can help in your situation;
- mediation sessions will be held at regular intervals and take between 90 minutes and three hours each; in certain cases, they will be run over several days;
- the parents will meet in the presence of one or more mediators; if one parent is in another country, the use of secure methods of online communication may be considered;
- in principle, the parties can participate in mediation in the language of their choice. If the available mediators do not speak that language, it is possible to engage a translator;
- if necessary, cultural interpreters can also be asked to participate in mediation in order to better take account of cultural differences between the participants.

The costs of mediation vary, depending on the professionals or services engaged. In some situations, mediation can be provided without charge or you might be given financial assistance. Ask about this at your first mediation meeting.



International Social Service (ISS)

The ISS is an international non-profit organisation founded in 1924 to support children, families and individuals facing family problems related to migration or international move. The interest of the child, as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is at the heart of the ISS intervention. The organization is present in 120 countries through a vast international network. Each year ISS handles more than 50,000 family situations worldwide.

In the **United States office**, parties are referred to trained mediators, who work directly with both parties to come to an agreement over the best interest of the child or children involved.

Other Links :

The **Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs**, the Office of Children's Issues serves as the U.S. Central Authority on the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. They can assist with the return of children to their home countries, who have been abducted to or wrongfully retained in countries outside their habitual residence.

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International Family Mediation
For an agreement crossing national borders



International Family Mediation helps resolve family conflicts that involve different countries and hence multiple legal systems. For example, IFM can assist where:

- the families concerned are binational or expatriate and are separating or in the process of divorce;
- one parent is considering a move to another country; when parents live in two different countries; and where there is wrongful removal or non-return of children;
- there are problems arising from the change in family circumstances; with the assistance of mediators, parents can address these problems and agree on each person's responsibilities and on a way of moving forward in accordance with their geographical and financial circumstances;
- children are involved; their needs are at the centre of this process and one of the main objectives is to arrive at solutions that safeguard their well-being and development.

Mediation is based on the voluntary participation of each party to the conflict.

Participate, communicate, find your solution.

The mediators make no judgements about what is said during mediation sessions. They support each party without putting them under pressure. They are obliged to maintain strict confidentiality.

Mediation is not therapy, not legal service and not a way to delay legal proceedings.

The mediators ensure that there is a framework for discussion that creates security for all the participants. Their role is to facilitate constructive communication between the parties and make sure that the mediation process runs smoothly:

- trained in mediation and specialized in mediation in international contexts, they work to ethical standards and under a professional code of practice;
- they have an excellent knowledge of legal time frames, and their intercultural competence enables them to meet the challenges posed by complex legal and multicultural environments;
- they have no power to make decisions relating to any agreement arising from mediation; it is the parties to the conflict that decide of the content of the agreement.

Why choose IFM?

International family mediation can:

- help you to address problems arising from differences in legal systems;
- help you to avoid long and costly legal proceedings;
- enable you to make the decisions about your future instead of having them imposed on you;
- help the participants to reflect jointly on the interests and needs of the children involved in the parental conflict and find solutions for every member of the family;
- take into account cultural differences within a family;
- help to prevent wrongful removal or non-return of children across national borders (situations known as "child abductions").

Speak freely about your needs and your fears and protect your children.

For what kind of conflicts?

International family mediation can help in conflicts related to:

- the children's place of residence;
- maintenance;
- continuing the relationship between the children and the parent living abroad (visits, holidays, frequency of contact, means of communication, etc.);
- the health, school life and activities of the children, as well as their education (languages, religion, sports, etc.);
- the fear of wrongful removal or non-return of the children;
- the return or non-return of the children to their country of habitual residence after a wrongful removal.

Dialogue is now possible in order to ensure the well-being of your children.

International Family Mediation and the Law

International family mediation is a method of conflict resolution that complements legal proceedings. Mediation can be conducted as a preventive measure *before* legal action, but also *at the beginning, during* and *after* a court process. In some cases it may make resorting to legal action unnecessary.

International families in conflict situations often face legal complexities, and it is therefore very important for the mediation process to be supported with *specialist legal advice* about matters such as:

- national and international laws that apply to your situation (for example, relating to international or regional conventions or bilateral agreements);
- whether it is necessary to refer a case to court or to take urgent or preventive measures to safeguard your rights before commencing mediation;
- which court or authority you have to apply to in order to render a mediated agreement legally binding and enforceable;
- which court will hear your case and hand down a judgment if mediation does not result in an agreement.

A mediation agreement can have legal effect if it is rendered binding and enforceable in all the countries concerned. This will enable you to go to court if the agreement is not respected.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the basis for protection of children involved in international family separations.



You will be supported, advised and accompanied by advisers during the entire process.