



**INTERNATIONAL
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Coordinated Cross-Border Social Services for Children and Families Migrating in the Northern Triangle, Mexico and the U.S.

April 28-29, 2016 ~ Antigua, Guatemala

Executive Summary

International Social Service-USA hosted a conference from April 28-29th in Antigua, Guatemala entitled “Coordinated Cross-Border Social Services for Children and Families Migrating in the Northern Triangle, Mexico and the U.S.” Twenty six participants from five countries and representing government, civil society and academia took part in the two day conference. The first day included an introduction to the International Social Service (ISS) Federation, the resource network for cross-border child welfare and the ISS case practice model. In addition, participants worked in small country groups to brainstorm how multidisciplinary teams would approach a cross-border case ensuring safe repatriation, reunification and reintegration.

This report focuses on the outcomes of group discussion on Friday April 29th, which included a review of outstanding questions and concerns, a discussion of group goals, an example cross-border case from the field, and ultimately a list of commitments from participants of action steps towards a coordinated network for cross-border services for migrating children.

Questions and Concerns: Outstanding questions fell into three broad categories. They included questions about *case protocols*, including managing cases in which children can't be returned safely to their homes; concerns around the need for *well-defined roles and responsibilities* in creating a strong network to work together; and finally, comments about the need for a comprehensive look at prevention activities and a more *inclusive dialogue around the rights of children and families in migration*.

Goals: To understand the unique goals and objectives of the stakeholders present, we generated a list of goals, which similarly fell into three categories. First, participants expressed a need for a *stronger feedback loop among stakeholders* to help enforce protocols. Additionally, there was a shared objective of incorporating more government and civil society actors to

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strengthen the network of providers. Finally, there was a goal to *work as a network to understand cross-border differences and similarities* in protocols and assess opportunities for sharing and collaboration.

Working a case: The group was presented with a current case of three siblings from Honduras, detained in Mexico as they traveled north to reunite with their mother in the U.S. The case generated discussion of opportunities for cross-border communication networks, protocols for involving different actors and potential actions to be taken with respect to the particular case or alternative scenarios.

Commitments: We ended by making a list of commitments to ensure the conversations over the course of two days were carried into action in the coming months. Action steps include creating *national coalitions with consistent communication mechanisms*; Outreach and awareness raising among government and civil society actors around the existence of the network in order to *build strategic partners and allies*; and *ongoing, cross-border contact* with conference participants and the extended network of stakeholders.

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