Inclusive Permanency Planning:
Improving equitable access to family for children with international connections
For Reflection...

How many people here have worked on a case where there was a family member overseas?

   Yes
   No
I don’t know
The needs of children are better served in the US, regardless of their family situation:
I am confident in my ability to help find and engage with a child’s potential family resources outside of the US.
INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE NETWORK

FOUNDED IN 1924, THE ISS NETWORK HAS BEEN CONNECTING CROSS BORDER FAMILIES IN OVER 100 COUNTRIES ACROSS THE GLOBE FOR NEARLY A CENTURY!
Families on the Move

~ 280m people live outside their county of origin (~45m in US)

~ 40m native born Americans have an immigrant parent (12% of population)

~ 127,000 unaccompanied minors released annually to sponsors in US

~ Between 5 and 8 million U.S. citizens living abroad

With 18 million children in the United States having at least one immigrant parent it is reasonable to assume that a subset of 391,000 children in the U.S foster care system have family connections overseas.
In 2021, the National Conference of State Legislatures produced a report [3] acknowledging families of color experience disproportionate and disparate permanency outcomes as compared to their White counterparts. To mitigate the disparity the report suggests the Child welfare systems develop culturally responsive practices and eliminate bias in placement processes.
ISS-USA exploratory research found that of respondents to a national survey of child welfare professionals, 84 – 90% were very familiar with the terms: Diligent Search, Family Finding, Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). Far less familiarity of cross-border placement or international placement was demonstrated.

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<tr>
<th>Awareness of policies</th>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Very Familiar</th>
<th>Somewhat Familiar</th>
<th>Not at All Familiar</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diligent Search</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6% 3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interstate Compact on the</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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<td>Placement of Children (ICPC)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Finding</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6% 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International placement</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-border placement</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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A majority of respondents indicated that international diligent search/family finding is not a regular part of their work, even when working with immigrant children.
A majority of respondents There was far less comfort and understanding of resources related to engaging with family internationally as compared to domestically.

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<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
<th>Disagreement</th>
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<td>I feel comfortable in my ability to conduct a diligent search domestically</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable in my ability to conduct a diligent search internationally</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have resources available to me to locate relatives of children internationally Including all domestic and international family placement resource options for a child is as an “equity” issue</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

[6] Neutral or Unsure responses are not included.
Maria is 6-years old living in Orange County Florida. She is taken into DCF custody and placed in a non-relative foster home after her mother is detained.

Her social worker begins to case plan

Through international family finding, her caseworker discovers that Maria has an aunt in Honduras who is willing and interested in caring for her.
Maria is a U.S. citizen whose family is from Honduras. Maria’s mother came to the United States when she was four months pregnant with her. Her father’s whereabouts are unknown and he has not been part of her life.

Maria grew up speaking Spanish in her home and spoke frequently with her maternal relatives in Honduras. She has no other family in the US. Maria’s mother, who was picked up by immigration officials after a traffic stop, ultimately receives a removal order.
Where do we stand:

- There are **4.5 million immigrants** in Florida.

- There are **1,464,000 children** in Florida with at least 1 immigrant parent.

- In FY22, **13,195 unaccompanied minors released to sponsors** in Florida—7th highest in the nation-3rd highest in the nation.

- ~**23,000 children** in state foster care.

With **34%** of children in Florida having at least one immigrant parent it is reasonable to assume that a subset of **23,000 children[1]** in the state foster care system have family connections overseas.

Family connections can:
- Give child resources when needed
- Connect child to their culture, language, traditions
- Strengthen child’s sense of identity
- Strengthen the extended family

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-351)

“...provides that, within 30 days after the removal of a child from the custody of a parent or parents of the child, the State shall exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents), subject to exceptions due to family or domestic violence...”
"There are critical aspects of practice that serve to **protect** and preserve a child’s **core identity and sense of belonging**. These include things like... conducting **exhaustive and ongoing kin searches**...and making placement decisions that carefully consider a child’s connections to their community. When agencies and courts don’t invest time and effort in these practices, **we prevent children from experiencing true permanency and well-being.**"
How Can ISS-USA Help?

Services in Support of:
- Person Tracing
- Document Tracing (birth certificate, death certificate, etc.)
- Notification of child in care, or serving of the legal documents
- Involve international family members in Family Team Meetings and other permanency planning activities

Equitable Permanency Planning
- International home studies
- Background Checks
- Community Resource Assessments
- Psychological Assessments

For Children in Transnational Families
- Child Welfare Checks
- Post Placement Follow up
- Travel Assistance - Repatriation Assistance
- Training and Technical Assistance
Community Resource Assessments

Assessment tool

Planning tool

Child Specific
ISS-USA offers repatriation and reintegration services that support families before and after reunification.

Return and Reintegration services should be part of concurrent planning.

Less than 30% of unaccompanied minors receive adjustment of immigration status (2018)

Pre-Departure Planning

Reception Support

Post-Return Services
Thank You!

To refer a case: https://www.iss-usa.org/refer-a-case/

Questions: Question@iss-usa.org

Training and Technical Assistance: eweisman@iss-usa.org