

International Parental Child Abduction Service

Last Updated Monday, 01 March 2010

International Parental Child Abduction

International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) is a term used to describe the situation of a parent taking a child to another country without the other parent's consent. It also applies to a parent who has taken a child on a holiday to another country, with the other parent's consent, but then refuses to return the child.

Cases of International Parental Child Abduction, while relatively unknown within the broader community, occur regularly across Australia and the rest of the world. In Australia, official records estimate 2-3 children are taken illegally by a parent out of and into Australia each week.

In recognition of the impact of IPCA on children and parents, International Social Service has established a telephone referral and support service for families affected by IPCA. The service, funded by the Federal Attorney-General's Department commenced in August 2005.

The service operates 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday.

National Office

ph: +613 9614 8755, Toll Free: 1300 657 843

NSW Office (NSW residents only)

ph: +61 2 9267 0300

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

This Convention is an international treaty which aims to assist with the prompt return of children who have been wrongfully removed from, or retained outside their country of habitual residence. The Convention only applies between countries that are parties to the Convention. These are known as Convention Countries and currently approximately eighty countries have signed the Convention.

If your child has been taken without your consent, visit the Attorney General's Department website at <http://www.ag.gov.au/childabduction> for more information about what you can do.

In the case of abduction to a Hague Convention country, there is a specific process to be undertaken through the Attorney General's Department to seek the return of the child. This department is the principal authority, known as the Central Authority and is responsible for administering applications both in and out of Australia which involve the removal of a child without parental consent. Each state and territory has their own Central Authority (usually located within the relevant child welfare department) which will process the application directly with the client.

Abduction involving non-Hague countries These cases are more challenging as the Australian Government does not have specific agreements regarding abduction to these countries, and therefore may not be able to enforce the return of a child. Different approaches may be required, such as engaging a local lawyer or making referrals to the ISS network.

The ISS network can assist in advising on the approach which has the highest likelihood of success in a particular

- The emotional impact on your child and on you;
- The best interests of your child.

One of the reasons a parent might want to leave Australia with their child is domestic violence. If you find yourself in this situation, there is significant support for you and the children to remain safe, or to assist you to leave the relationship and remain in Australia.

Please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 for details of domestic violence services in your state or territory.

The Service offers advice on the course of action a person can take, including legal remedies, court actions and liaison with the Central Authorities.

ISS Australia is part of a broader international network and using our network we can sometimes facilitate contact between children and left behind parents, conduct welfare checks, and assist parents who have taken a child overseas to communicate with the other parent.

The Social Worker can offer:

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Emotional support in dealing with feelings and reactions;

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Practical support and information regarding who to contact for further advice and assistance;

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An approach using the principles of mediation to attempt to improve communication between parents and to facilitate relationships between parents and children;

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Referrals to assist with specific issues;

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Coordinated point for services involved in abduction matters; and

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Provide information on lawyers who have experience in working on international parental child abduction matters.

2. Community Education and Training

The Service provides training and community education to agencies and community groups who wish to know more about IPCA. A Service worker is available to speak at meetings and community events. Specific training can also be provided.

3. Advocacy and Research

ISS Australia uses statistical data from our casework to input into research regarding the needs and concerns of families experiencing IPCA.