Family Engagement and Permanency Planning Across the Border: a case study from San Diego
Family Engagement and Permanency Planning Across the Border:

a case study from San Diego

Francisco, a 15 year old boy who lives in a local group home, was born in the US but grew up with his father in Tijuana. His mother is deceased. Francisco’s father worked on the US side of the border and one day, when Francisco was about 10, his father went off to work and never returned. Francisco cared for himself and waited for his father’s return until an adult noticed he was always alone in the community. That adult turned him in to DIF (Mexico’s public social service agency) and, as he is a US citizen, he was transported to San Diego and has been in foster and group home care since. Casey took this on as a test case, hoping to find and reconnecting him with his family. At best, he would be placed with a family member straight from the group home, without ever needing an additional placement in a Casey home.

After researching what information (BOTH surnames, state of origin for the family, etc.) is needed to find someone in Mexico I mined Francisco’s county file and was able to find the necessary information in a report from INS pertaining to an arrest of the father at the US border. The report stated that the father had tried to bring someone with false identification into the US in his car. In fact, we later discovered that this arrest had led to the father’s incarceration in the US. So, when San Diego’s HHSA office was communicating with Mexican authorities in an attempt to find the father he was actually in this country! Someone had gone as far as to inquire with INS and obtain the document but did not follow up to find out that the father was detained at a US facility nor did they realize that the information needed to search for this man and/or his family in Mexico was within the document. I submitted the information found in the INS arrest report to the International Liaison’s office and was in touch with Francisco’s father about a week later.

The father was extremely happy to learn that his son was OK as he had returned to Mexico to find Francisco gone and searched for him to no avail. On 11/2/2007, we held an Family group conference (FGC) at a hotel in Tijuana. In attendance from San Diego were Francisco and a staff member from his group home, myself, a Casey Community Specialist, the assigned HHSA Social Worker and two staff persons from HHSA’s International Liaison’s Office. The staff member from the group home was Francisco’s identified emotional support and also served to translate for Francisco and his family during the private family time as Francisco’s Spanish has deteriorated significantly since he came to live in the US. In attendance from Tijuana were Francisco’s father, stepmom, aunt, uncle, five cousins, grandmother and two sisters. The family was able to talk about what had happened and answer a great many questions for each other. They were also able to begin the discussing whether Francisco should return to the care of his family. Lastly, we began the process to get clearance from both governments so that they can have visitation in the meantime. A follow-up FGC was held a month later. Between FGCS both HHSA and Casey looked at how to we would serve this family in case they decide to be reunified. We needed to find a way to resource this family as their needs are many, financial and otherwise. Another focus was to figure out how to help Francisco with what would surely prove to be quite a culture shock. The second FGC was held in December and the family was informed that Francisco would be able to visit them over the holidays. There was more discussion as to the logistics of reunification and the priorities of the family. The family members each wrote a letter about their personal feelings and opinions as to what should happen next. It was decided that the family would spend the next six months getting to know each other again and thinking about the different prospects for their future. We will convene again before the next court hearing (6/08) so we can present the court with the family’s wishes and a plan to bring them to fruition. Before that time we will prepare a proposal to meet the family’s needs, which were outlined in the process of the second FGC, should they decide to reunify.

The FGCS were not only a wonderful experience for this young man and his birth family but there were other benefits derived from the process. The International Liaison’s office is going to change the process for relative search requests, asking that the county Social Worker submitting the request first uses the resources available to his or her office to inquire with INS, corrections, etc. to see if that person happens to be active with one of our systems in the US. Indeed, had this been done with Francisco’s case he would have been out of contact with his family for a short period and he would not have lost so much of his language and culture over the past five years.

Also, the process has created a close working relationship with HHSA’s International Liaison’s Office and has enabled us to find and develop a contract with a company that specializes in finding relatives in Mexico. Both of these factors will greatly enhance our ability to aid in developing emotional and legal permanence for the Latino youth who are involved with Casey and have ties to family in Mexico.
Issues highlighted by this case study include:

- 1). The need to have staff members who are knowledgeable about the cultures/languages, etc. on both sides of the border,
- 2). The need for children to maintain their given name when the enter the child welfare system of another country,
- 3). The need for all border communities to have an International Liaison's office,
- 4). The need for procedural measures that ensure the care and safety of children when their parents are detained as a result of immigration issues,
- 5). The need for officials from both sides of the border to be able to access systems (correctional, CPS, etc.) in each country when searching for parents, relatives, children,
- 6). The need for parents to be able to learn that their child has become active in the child welfare system across the border,
- 7). The need for cooperation and a formalized system to allow and facilitate visitation, placement and services across borders,
- 8). The personal bias on the part of child welfare professionals as to what is in the best interest of a child when different cultures exist
- 9). The Loss of culture/language/family traditions a child suffers when he is placed in an unfamiliar environment and the difficulty of regaining that culture
Needs-based proposal of service provision for this family

- 1). Private schooling in the US for Francisco (Casey)
- 2). Move to a bigger home (Casey)
- 3). Bedroom furniture and clothing for Francisco (Casey)
- 4). Individual and family counseling services (DIF)
- 5). One year of case management services (Casey/HFSA)
- 6). Adoption Assistance Payments (HFSA)

Financing Permanency for Francisco

- Costs associated with reunification with the above described services – $6,216
- Costs associated with reunification without AAP - $18,216
- Costs associated with continued dependency - $24,192
- Potential savings - $18,000
CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

International Liaison Presentation

Liaison with the Following:

- All Social Services Agencies Abroad
- DIF Mexico (Municipal and State level).
  DIF (Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia)
- Consulates and Embassies of all nations
  (including U.S. Consulates/Embassies abroad)
- Customs and Border Protection (Homeland Security)
- INAMI (Instituto Nacional de Migración) Mexican Immigration
- Mexican Judicial Liaisons at the State and Federal level.
- Medical facilities and professionals-domestic and abroad
International Liaison’s Goal:

- To carry on with our Agency’s mission statement of protecting children and preserving families when coordinating the delivery of services with other agencies abroad.
- Promoting best practice and a proactive approach.

Examples of common requests:

- Home Evaluations
- Parent Searches
- Criminal Background checks
- Reunification Services
- Birth, death, marriage certificates
- Home visits to monitor placements
- Adoption Home Studies
- Cross Reports
- Parole Letters
- Notice to Consulate/Embassies
- .26 Notices
- Screens all travel requests
Family Reunification Abroad
Challenges:

Staff

- Our Court time frames for FR cases versus the time frame response of Social Services Agencies abroad.
- Lack of specialized services abroad (e.g. in home services)
- Poor communication with their clients abroad (due to phone lines being busy or time zone difference)
- “Fear Factor” afraid of the unknown and not knowing how to deal with these cases
- Making difficult judgment calls when placing children abroad

Clients

- Lack of support system (Parents hide their situation from family abroad especially at the beginning of the case due to the shame associated with having their children taken away)
- Not all parents qualify to be paroled to the U.S. for visits and court hearings (If their children are also undocumented, visits can not be arranged at the S.Y. port or through DIF)
- Deported parents have a hard time starting over in their own country especially when they don’t have their proper Mexican documentation up to date (e.g. lack of birth certificate to get their ID) They are not able to get a job or housing.
- Not all parents stay close to the border and others try to cross back again. This often works against them in court due to the time spent away from doing their case plan.
Family Reunification Abroad
Proactive Approach:

Staff

- Early identification of the family needs (e.g. immigration status family, International request for Services or a home evaluation etc.)
- Submitting notice to consulate in a timely manner (avoiding court continuances)
- Making attempts to get addresses and phone numbers to locate the non-offending parent residing abroad.
- Requesting birth certificates of undocumented children during FR process (this document contains the addresses and names useful to locate relatives and non-offending parent abroad)

Clients

- Identifying a phone number where they can be reached. Notifying SWs best time to call/challenges phone lines)
- Taking the initiative and approaching their Social Services Agency to initiate services.
- Use Embassy or Consulate abroad for support or as an advocate. (SRE in Mexico)
- Remain in contact with their SW (collect calls, letters, e-mails etc.)
# Most Used International Liaison Forms
*(Where to find them and When to use them)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Where to find it</th>
<th>When to use it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Services Request (2 Pages)</td>
<td>04-309</td>
<td>CWS “Nifty Fifties”</td>
<td>Every time you request services from another country. Common Requests are: home evaluation, Parent Search, Adoption home Study, Parole letter, Vital Records, Cross report, continuing services(drug testing, parenting classes etc.), home visit, .26 notices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notification to Foreign Consulate/ Embassy</td>
<td>04-231</td>
<td>CWS “Nifty Fifties”</td>
<td>Every time you have a parent or a child born in a foreign country (Even if the parent has become U.S citizen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parole Request Letter (2 Pages)</td>
<td>04-242</td>
<td>Intranet (updated version)</td>
<td>CBP Parole letters are for undocumented parents or caretakers residing out of the U.S. Parole to be present for Juvenile Court Hearings/ Proceedings. Good only for 24hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of County Court Ordered Travel Request (1 Page)</td>
<td>04-131</td>
<td>Call Travel Desk, Gerry Dailey at 7694-5769 to e-mail you the form with your assigned Account</td>
<td>Every time you have to leave the Country. Faxed the 04-131 for International Liaison’s signature.</td>
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INTERNATIONAL LIAISON’S FAX-858/514-6632

1MS-W456

1 REV-02/07

Janet Barragán 858/514-6730 & Francisco Llerandi 858/514-6911
INTERNATIONAL SERVICES REQUEST

DATE:          CASE NAME:          CASE NO.:

A. Complete one 04-309 per individual request (i.e. one for parent search, one for home evaluation, etc.)

☐ 366.26 PERSONAL SERVICE (include 45-day deadline and the waiver paperwork)
☐ ADOPTION HOME STUDY
☐ CONTINUING SERVICES (if needed, elaborate in section D below)
  ☐ AA/NA ☐ Drug testing ☐ D.V. services ☐ Parenting classes ☐ Psychological evaluation
  ☐ Therapy ☐ Other(s)
☐ CROSS REPORT OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY
☐ DOCUMENT FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY (i.e. birth, death, marriage, divorce certificate, etc.)
☐ HOME EVALUATION
☐ HOME VISITATION WELFARE CHECK (to monitor care of dependent minors placed abroad)
☐ PARENT SEARCH (include full name, including maternal and paternal last names)
☐ MISCELLANEOUS REQUEST (explain in section D below)

B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of ALL child(ren) affected by this request</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Place of Birth (city, state, country)</th>
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<tr>
<th>Name of ALL parents affected by this request</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Place of Birth (city, state, country)</th>
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C. INDIVIDUAL(S) TO BE EVALUATED/SEARCHED*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full name (include paternal and maternal last names)</th>
<th>DOB</th>
<th>Relationship to minor(s)</th>
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*Include additional individuals in Section D

COUNTRY AND STATE:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE(S):
INTERNATIONAL SERVICES REQUEST

D. Social Worker comments/concerns/special instructions (including follow-up):

E. COMPLETE ALL FIELDS BELOW:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEXT HEARING DATE:</th>
<th>TYPE OF HEARING:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL WORKER:</td>
<td>WORKER #:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL WORKER PROGRAM:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW TELEPHONE:</td>
<td>SW FAX #:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SEND REQUEST TO:

FAX (858) 514-6632    MAILSTOP W456    EMAIL (check roster for International Liaison)

Please submit one form per request even if it relates to the same family – i.e. parent search and birth certificate for one family should be submitted in two separate 04-309s.

SOCIAL WORKER FOLLOW-UP and/or ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON REQUESTS

Every request is assigned an International Liaison reference number. Please make note of the reference number for follow-up purposes. Please provide the following information:

1) Name of individual(s) being evaluated and date of original request
2) Type of request (i.e. adoption home study, parent search, etc.)

In order to avoid misunderstandings and duplication of information, all initial communication must be coordinated through the office of the International Liaison. Once initial contact has been made by the office of the International Liaison, Social Workers may communicate with agencies abroad.

RESULTS ARE NOT TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH. Social Workers may contact the Administrative Analyst at (7) 694-5228 for assistance with translations.
NOTICE TO CONSULATE/EMBASSY

Consulate/Embassy:
Address:

Dear Consular Officer,

The child(ren) and/or parent(s) listed below, is/are believed to be citizens/nationals of your country:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child(ren)'s Name (first, middle and all last names)</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Place of Birth (City and State)</th>
<th>Protective Services due to WIC 300</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent(s)'s Name (first, middle and all last names)</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Place of Birth (City and State)</th>
<th>Parent to Child(ren) (A-F)</th>
</tr>
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The child(ren) is/are under the supervision of the Health and Human Services Agency in San Diego County, and/or the State of California Superior Court. The child(ren) has/have been in protective custody since and for their protection a petition was filed in the Juvenile Court on . The child(ren)'s current placement is/are:

- Polinsky Children's Center; 9400 Ruffin Court, San Diego, CA 92123; TEL. (858) 514-4600; Child(ren):
- Non-offending parent: ; TEL. ; Child(ren):
- Relative: ; TEL. ; Child(ren):
- Foster parent: Confidential; TEL. ; Child(ren):

If you want additional and/or on-going information regarding the status of this case, please contact the assigned Social Worker to this case, at .

Signature of International Liaison
(858) 514-6730 or (858) 514-6911
(858) 514-6632 Fax – MS W456

04-231 (11/07) L1
PAROLE REQUEST LETTER

Date:

Bruce Ward, Assistant Deputy Port Director
San Ysidro and Otay Ports of Entry
USA Bureau of Customs and Border Protection

Dear Mr. Ward:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child(ren):</th>
<th>DEPENDENCY PETITION NO:</th>
</tr>
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</table>

The presence of the □ mother □ father □ relative

Name: ____________________ DOB: ____________

is requested for:

☐ Juvenile Court proceedings on the following date at the Courthouse located at:

☐ Juvenile Court Mandated Reunification Plan / Visitation on the following date:  

Address: ____________________________

We request that this person be paroled into the United States at the following Port of Entry:

Please inform if the parole is either granted or denied for this individual at your earliest convenience by returning this letter to the International Liaison via fax at (858) 514-6632. If you have any questions, please call the office of the International Liaison at (858) 514-6730. Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter.

Cordially,

International Liaison  
Child Welfare Services  
Health and Human Services Agency  
San Diego County

Supervisor  
Name:  
Telephone:  

Social Worker  
Name:  
Telephone:  
Fax:  

04-242 (06/07) L1
The International Services Request for a parent search in México submitted on 2-08-08 lacks minimum and necessary information for your request to be processed. The following check list was designed to guide you with the collection of information that could successfully lead us to locating parents/relatives abroad. Your International Services Request number is ________.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please complete the following before sending another search:</th>
<th>Check List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Provide complete search name including <strong>paternal</strong> and <strong>maternal</strong> last names. Provide also any AKA's.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Date of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Place of birth Including state, city, town (In the absence of a name, a description of the town or village might be helpful)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Gather as much information about the individual from parent/relative/child/CWS-CMS/Police reports.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. If the individual has ever been deported, request for INS records. (You can do this by submitting a County parent search form 04-52 to the parent search clerk)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Provide any last known address and phone numbers abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Search for clues on minor's and individual's birth certificate. (Mexican birth certificates contain crucial information such as signed witnesses info, grandparents names, addresses, and specific town names)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Physical description of the individual i.e. height, weight, hair, eyes, particular marks etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Gather information from relatives abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Available relatives might have the parent's last known telephone number on their telephone records.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You must complete this form and attached it to your request before re-submitting a new search for this parent.

**Name:** Janet Barragán__SPSW____  **Department/Office:** __International Liaison____

**Signature:** __________________________  **Date:** __2-11-08__

Comments/Suggestions (Please feel free to contact us with any comments/suggestions regarding this form)
Contact Information

- Janet Barragan – HHSA’s International Liaison’s Office in San Diego County
- JANET.BARRAGAN@sdcounty.ca.gov

- Melissa Proctor – Casey Family Programs San Diego Field Office
- mproctor@casey.org, (619)683-5641