



ORGANIZING MEETING & EMBASSY WALK

June 11 -13, 2014

Washington DC

POST-MEETING REPORT

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EVENT SUMMARY

Event Name: iStand Parent Network Inaugural Organizing Meeting & Embassy Walk

Date: June 11-13, 2014

Venue: Washington DC

Conference Organizers: iStand Parent Network Core Leadership Group

Overview

The Inaugural **iStand Parent Network International Organizing Meeting & Embassy Walk** was held to facilitate the development of a coalition of parents, supporters and organizations to educate key publics on the complex problem and solutions to the epidemic of international parental child abductions, wrongful removal and wrongful retention of children from their countries of habitual residence. The idea for an organizing meeting emerged from weekly conference calls in which the Core Leadership Group envisioned a time of parent advocacy, peer support, ideas and strategies exchange, dialogue and coalition building. It is notable that the inaugural meeting was planned and executed in less than three months, and each participant devoted significant time and personal financial resources toward the assembly. Such commitment toward this important cause is indicative of the necessity of self-sacrifice and collective desire to see an end to this painful problem. Most of the meeting events were filmed by STOP EXIT, a collaborative documentary project about international custody disputes and parental child abduction.

Participants represented various experiences and areas of expertise, including parents and other family members whose children currently are in Canada, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Scotland and Mali. Two attendees successfully returned their children from Greece and Israel. Another participant's son was abducted to Ecuador as a child and is now an adult living in the US. A presenter and fellow parent who participated via SKYPE successfully returned his son and son's half-brother from Eastern Europe. One presenter is an adult survivor of parental abduction and parental alienation, and another presenter is a risk management specialist who shared strategies for helping parents understand custom, cultural, ideological elements often present in international custody disputes.

Three events occurred on **Wednesday, June 11:** (1) 14 participants had a discussion with officials from the **U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Children's Issues** (CI) to discuss topics ranging from the utility of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, the variation in experiences working with CI, and ways in which *iStand Parent Network* could effectively cooperate with that Office to better address this problem. (2) Participants were welcomed by and briefly shared their experiences with U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, and (3) 15 Participants conducted an **Embassy Walk** to the foreign embassies of Mali, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Israel. Participants marched in solidarity with parents and, in some cases, waited while parents entered those embassies to meet with country officials.

Sixteen participants attended the **Thursday, June 12**, organizing meeting which included: an articulation and consensus agreement on the *iStand Parent Network* Vision and Mission Statements; a reconciliation meeting and identification of action items from the CI discussion: a workshop on effectively using social media; a session on the influences of custom, culture and ideology on individual cases and in foreign nations; a session on the profound effects of parental abduction and parental alienation; and one parent's personal efforts to return his daughter and the special challenges of military families and variation in judicial discretion. Thursday's meeting concluded with an overview of *iStand Parent Network's* proposed organizational structure and an invitation to participants accept or continue an active role in the coalition's development. The next Organizing Meeting will be held March 25-27, 2015.

Friday, June 13 was an optional **Congressional Lobby Day** in which remaining participants individually and collectively met with legislators and visited the offices of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to introduce *iStand Parent Network* as a Congressional resource.

Meeting Administration

Registrations

16 Delegates registered and attended the meeting from California, Georgia, Kentucky, Illinois, Maryland, New York and Pennsylvania. Advance registration occurred through Eventbrite.com.

Advance Registrations	7
On-Site Registrations	6
Complimentary Registrations	3
Total Registrations	16

Accommodations

The Hotel Harrington served as the meeting location and also the official accommodations hotel for the *iStand Parent Network* Inaugural Organizing Meeting & Embassy Walk. The Hotel Harrington donated meeting space for Thursday's day-long meeting and offered a special discounted rate for participants. The management and staff also accommodated several requests from meeting organizers that helped facilitate a successful assembly. Garage parking was available at an additional cost per day to participants. The Hotel Harrington is centrally located in the heart of Downtown Washington DC.

Eventbrite

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/istand-parent-network-international-organizing-conference-embassy-walk-tickets-11296779973?aff=es2&rank=0>

Eventbrite proved to be a free, easy-to-use, and colorful Web-based resource for meeting registration and event organization. Beyond our basic use, there are more features that can be utilized for future meetings, including video and marketing tools. Meeting organizers recommend investigating further potential applications and an upgrade to the premium for maximum utility for future meetings and events.

Shdlr.com

<http://istandparentnetworkmeeting.shdlr.com/grid>

A week before the meeting, organizers added an additional Web-based tool to help with organization and attendance. This site permitted a breakdown of meeting times and locations as well as a page for presenter biographies. Several participants commented on the utility of the shdlr.com site for quickly finding information that also linked to the Eventbrite page. *iStand Parent Network* utilized the free version of the online tool, which had some limitations. The site's technical support promptly responded to requests for assistance. Meeting organizers recommend investigating further potential applications and an upgrade to the premium for maximum utility for future meetings and events.

Survey Monkey

Survey Monkey was used to collect pre-and-post meeting feedback. The post-meeting evaluation survey had some glitches that must be resolved by technical support, and a drawback to getting technical support is that live help is not available with free use. Survey Monkey has tremendous potential beyond simple meeting data collection for growing the coalition and enhancing our ability to collect meaningful information that informs the work of our five organizational hubs. (see attachments). Meeting organizers recommend investigating further potential applications and an upgrade to the premium for maximum utility for future meetings and events.

DAILY EVENT SUMMARY

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11, 2014 ~ U.S. Department of State, Capitol Hill, Embassy Row

9:00 – 10:30 a.m. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Children's Issues

Fourteen parents and supporters met with Office of Children's Issues (CI) Director Beth Payne from 9:00- 10:30 a.m. The meeting opened with brief introductions by *iStand* participants and CI staff. Dir. Payne stated that she could not discuss individual cases, but welcomed the opportunity to speak generally on the role CI and also asked for comments from *iStand* participants about what assistance has been useful and areas that could be improved. Much of the discussion turned on the applicability and processes of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Payne generally discussed the ways in which CI assists parents, both in the U.S. and from other nations who opened applications here, with the process. Questions arose about U.S. enforcement of Hague decisions and compliance with the Hague treaty. Payne noted that signatory nations are bound by treaty to facilitate the applications processes and enforcement and said the U.S. attempts to hold its treaty partners accountable for enforcement. Some parents discussed voluntary return letters they received from CI, and expressed concern about how the language of such letters was at once confusing and even scary to parents with limited understanding of Hague processes. Payne said she welcomed input on potential enhancements to the CI's voluntary return letter, though she offered no assurances that suggestions would be implemented.

One surprising element of the discussion came when Payne stated that it is not a child's citizenship status but rather their country of habitual residence that is a paramount consideration in Hague decisions. She also told participants that there are significant differences in the ways in which the Office can assist parents in cases of international parental child abduction versus wrongful removal, wrongful retention issues which often are civil custodial matters that arise when parents' relationships break down. A parent asked about U.S. ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The U.S. has not ratified that convention and therefore CI has no position on it. Regarding prevention of U.S. children being wrongfully removed or internationally abducted, *iStand* parents were told that a "robust" prevention program was in place to address this concern. There was discussion about the volume of CI caseloads and also variation in responses from country officers, with several parents stating that their country officers had changed multiple times. A parent asked what measures were in place to address an expected increase in abduction cases to CI. Payne stated that the number of incoming cases are actually decreasing, and that steps had been taken to reduce individual country officers' caseloads, but also acknowledged that some turnover is to be expected in that line of work. Payne said the Office of Children's Issues has recently implemented a training program to achieve a smoother transition in the inevitable case load transfer. Acknowledging some of the Constitutional and charter limitations of CI to manage the complex issue, Payne encouraged *iStand Parent Network* to continue to educate state legislators, Congress and family court systems in ways that would improve or support the process for parents seeking access to or return of their children.



11:00 - 11:30 a.m. U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell

Participants went immediately from the meeting with the Office of Children's Issues to a brief meet and greet with U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell in the U.S. Capitol. McConnell welcomed each parent personally and briefly heard the stories of some parents whose children and grandchildren are or were held abroad. McConnell encouraged the group to continue its important advocacy work and posed for pictures which will be forwarded to the group at a later date.

1:00 – 4: 00 p.m. iStand Parent Network Embassy Walk



Fifteen participants marched to the foreign embassies of Mali, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Israel in solidarity with parents who have active cases in which their children are abducted to, wrongfully removed or wrongfully held in those nations. All assembled in the Hotel Harrington lobby and shared taxis to the Embassy Walk start point, the Mali Embassy.

Participants held custom made signs produced by a sister of a parent in the Network. Some signs bore the image of children while others had the general *iStand Parent Network* logo and catchphrase, "iStand Until ALL Children Come Home". Participants marched in solidarity with parents and, in some cases, waited while parents entered those embassies to meet with country officials, relay information about their children's cases or otherwise seek the assistance of that nation for access or return.

The Embassy Walk was impactful and the meeting planning committee recommends its expansion and replication for future *iStand Parent Network* Organizing Meetings.



EVENT SUMMARY

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2014 ~ Hotel Harrington Conference Room

10:00 – 11:00 am Vision & Mission Articulation and Reconciliation Meeting

The Organizing Meeting began with a solemn invocation. *iStand Parent Network* Co-founder Dr. Noelle Hunter welcomed participants and affirmed the important work done on Wednesday and that which was still to occur. She read the Vision Statement aloud and explained the significance and necessity of such action to enshrine the mission and vision statements and to achieve esprit de corps among the participants who had invested significant time and financial resources in the coalition's start up. Participants then alternated reading aloud the 10-point Mission Statement as a consensual affirmation of what *iStand Parent Network* is charged to do.

Dr. Hunter then facilitated a reconciliation meeting to determine actionable items from the Wednesday meeting with the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Children's Issues (CI) and the Embassy Walk. Delegates identified **FIVE** action items (initiatives) that are aligned with specific elements of the 10-point Mission Statement:

INITIATIVE I

Submit suggestions to CI to improve the language of the voluntary return letters that CI sends to parents with Hague decisions from foreign courts to:

- make it more diplomatic and informative
- emphasize the *voluntary* nature of the letter
- clarify the implications of compliance and non-compliance with voluntary return
- emphasize the need to retain legal counsel
- "soften" the language to make it less threatening

Mission point:

1) To **STAND** together to urge the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Children's Issues to exert diplomatic pressure and elicit cooperation from nations where children are held, maintain strong and consistent casework reporting and response and enhance inter-agency cooperation for family reunification.

Leadership:

The Indiana delegation will take the lead in drafting a suggested letter to improve the language of the voluntary return letter and submit proposed revisions directly to CI Director Beth Payne.

INITIATIVE II

Identify a strategy for educating U.S. courts and officers of the courts, including federal, circuit, district and domestic and family court judges, lawyers, guardian ad litem, and other court officers on:

- The 1996 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction
- The necessity of granting judicial temporary "stays" or "cooling periods" in matters of international custody disputes
- The profound effects of parental alienation on families and especially on children
- Red flags and warning signs of impending abductions, wrongful removals and wrongful retentions
- Prevention strategies to reduce the incidence of such

Mission points:

6) To **STAND** together and educate family courts and officers on international parental child abduction risks and legal measures which courts should incorporate to mitigate risk.

10) To **STAND** as a collective to build a secure knowledge base that assists families in securing access rights, and resolving wrongful retention and wrongful removal.

Leadership:

A member of the Illinois delegation proposed the dissemination of an existing 1996 Hague Convention Guide for Judges as a “primer” and starting point for achieving this mission point. The Pennsylvania delegate also forwarded information to the Core Leadership Group on the 1980 Hague Convention to participants during the meeting. A New York delegate suggested identifying and engaging law students to assist with this strategy as a course-level “cause”. These delegates will work cooperatively and during the weekly conference call to develop an efficient means to identify and circulate the “primary” and to develop a long-term strategy in concert with the full Core Leadership Group.

INITIATIVE III

Restart the conversation at the Congressional level on U.S. ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child leading to:

- **A more informed electorate on the aspects of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**
- **Informed and engaged U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators who consider and pass laws that affirm the supremacy of the rights of children**
- **A consistent child advocacy presence at the federal level by parents and supporters who affirm these rights**

Mission points:

4) To educate Congress, asking that they **STAND** with parents to enact comprehensive laws that left behind parents can use to bring their children home.

8) To **STAND** as a network and advocate for family rights. We work collectively to identify tools resources that support children’s right to be present in their parents’ lives.

Leadership:

A member of the Indiana delegation and the Kentucky delegation will review the history and substance of the UN Convention and develop an advocacy platform that elevates the issue and integrates consideration of the rights of children in policy development and implementation at the local, state and federal level and that may ultimately lead to U.S. ratification of the Convention.

INITIATIVE IV

Continue individual meetings with state and federal legislators and their appropriate staff members for delegates’ home states to advocate for their individual cases and on behalf of iStand Parent Network to:

- **Elicit the cooperation of the U.S. Congress in keeping the issues of international parental child abduction, wrongful retention and wrongful removal salient and integrated into discussions and policymaking**
- **Enhance the capacity of the U.S. Congress to amend or write new laws that protect children and families from these problems, reduce the incidence of such and further empower the Executive Branch to implement and enforce civil and criminal remedies**

Mission points:

- 1) To **STAND** together to urge the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Children's Issues to exert diplomatic pressure and elicit cooperation from nations where children are held, maintain strong and consistent casework reporting and response and enhance inter-agency cooperation for family reunification.
- 2) To press the U.S. Department of Justice to **STAND** with parents to enforce the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act of 1993, pursue criminal prosecution and negotiate plea agreements when warranted and enforce laws that protect parents and children and lead to safe returns.
- 3) To request the Department of Homeland Security **STAND** with us to prevent further abductions, and to implement and enforce exit controls at all U.S. borders and airports for children traveling abroad.
- 4) To educate Congress, asking that they **STAND** with parents to enact comprehensive laws that left behind parents can use to bring their children home.

Leadership:

Each delegate will continue personal and collective actions to achieve this initiative and will continue to discuss and communicate these efforts via the weekly conference call, special-called meetings and through the annual *iStand Parent Network* Organizing Meeting & Embassy Walk.

INITIATIVE V**Continue and expand the Embassy Walk as permanent element of the annual iStand Parent Network Organizing Meeting as a means to:**

- Convey our commitment to access to and return of our children to representatives of foreign nations with a presence in the United States
- Express solidarity and advance the parent advocacy imperative
- Empower silent parents and family members to actively pursue their children through a unified voice and through a public campaign
- Create opportunities for parents, family members and supporters to directly engage with nations to seek access and return

Mission points:

- 5) To encourage the central authorities in other nations to **STAND** and act with urgency on matters of abduction, wrongful removal, wrongful retention and access rights.
- 8) To **STAND** as a network and advocate for family rights. We work collectively to identify tools resources that support children's rights to be present in their parents' lives.

Leadership:

iStand parents, family members and supporters will always self-identify and self-select embassies to approach during the Annual Embassy Walk held in conjunction with the Organizing Meeting. Those who register for the annual meeting will always have the option to participate in the voluntary Embassy Walk.

Speakers Program

11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Social Media 101

Presenters: Bob Pfeifer, Jerry's Dad and Founder, Jerry's Army and Alissa Zagaris, Leo's Mom & iStand Parent Network Co-founder and Parent Advocate

Bob began the discussion by inviting participants to consider and understand the utility of social media can be a creative, effective and powerful tool for:

- Searching for and finding our children
- Raising awareness
- Influencing governments
- Finding global allies
- Building empathy
- Influencing traditional media
- Altering perceptions
- Strategic misinformation
- Countering misinformation
- Communicating with children directly
- Investigation ("Connecting the dots")

Bob also emphasized the "generally free" nature of Facebook, Twitter and other emergent media as a means to offset the often expensive fight in which many parents are engaged. He identified some essential elements and considerations necessary to affect a successful social media campaign:

- The necessary time investment
- The need for strategic use
- Passion and commitment



Alissa shared her personal experiences using a social media campaign to:

- Mobilize and extensive support network
- Counter the taking parent's message
- Eliminate communication barriers with her son
- Strengthen legal enforcement pressure
- Expand international connections

The conversation continued between, Bob, Alissa and conference participants. Highlights and suggestions include:

- Caution about use of social media internationally when things get "lost in translation". Bob suggested a remedy is to have a trusted source and native speaker in the other country to review every post or message before its transmitted to avoid offending or inflaming situations/tensions. This will also help avoid the "ugly American" stereotype.
- The need to avoid divulging case particulars and engaging in personal attacks in favor of proceeding from a "Love & Light" perspective with the child's welfare as the focus.
- Warnings that the discussing custody matters on social media is prohibited in some countries.
- Awareness that social media is used differently in other countries, which speaks to the need for parents to gauge the appropriateness of this strategy (Throw out the "USA Playbook" for social media use)
- Having a "mirror site" in the language of the country where the child is and buying domain names in that country
- Tone down supporters who may want to take a negative approach to avoid hurting your cause and reinforce to them the purpose of the site
- Utilize the delete/block function when necessary but be mindful that no information is every truly "deleted"
- Try to personally "like" every supportive comment and thank supporters for their contributions
- Recognize that negative comments from the taking/holding parent may be used as evidence in legal proceedings
- Utilize social media and email accounts as a "hope chest" "living journal" or "viral time capsule" to store photos, stories and evidence of parents' fight for their children to show them when they return home and as a tool to promote emotional healing and recovery

12:45 – 2:00 p.m. In Pursuit of Our Children

Presenter: Sam Blackstone, Blackstone Risk Management Inc.

This closed session provided parents a safe forum to articulate questions and concerns about far reaching effects of abduction, wrongful retention and removal on families and Mr. Blackstone asked participants to consider three key ideas related to their individual cases and the issue generally:

- Custom
- Culture
- Ideology

Blackstone invited parents and family members to meet with him privately to discuss case specifics.

2:00 – 3:15 p.m. *Extraordinary Circumstances*

Presenter: Scott Berne, author and member of the board of directors for the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Participants were captivated by Scott's compelling and vivid account of his and his brother's experience being taken from their father, profound parental alienation, living abroad and returning to the U.S. to remain in hiding until a woman saw their story in Ladies Home Journal magazine. This ultimately led to their reunification with their father, an onslaught of media attention, the test case for the first law to address parental kidnapping in the U.S., new emotional highs and lows, and Berne's ultimate path to emotional recovery from victim to survivor.

- The emotional discussion that ensured allowed parents to face their worst fears about how parental alienation can/may occur when children are separated from the other parent and family members. Participants discussed:
- Recognition of the long journey to wholeness that abducted children will have when they come home
- Recognition of the stages of recovery involved (children cannot go straight to the survivor stage)
- The lingering impact of parental alienation on children's psychological, emotional and behavioral disposition
- The need for patience and understanding from the reunited parent and family members
- The potential positive or harmful impact that a step parent can have during and in the aftermath of an abduction
- The necessity of becoming empowered to help our children recover using therapeutic options and resources like NCMEC
- Not waiting until children come home to become educated about parental alienation

After sharing his personal experience, Scott charged participants to adopt the following approach:

AWARENESS + EDUCATION = PREVENTION



3:30 – 4:45 p.m. Eris’ Story

Presenter: U.S. Army SFC Jeff Chafin, Eris’ Daddy and Founder, Reuniting America’s Children

Jeff shared his experience and personal perspectives as a father and member of the U.S. Armed Forces pressing for access to and return of his daughter. He began his presentation by stating that he thought he was relatively alone in this fight before finding out the prevalence of such cases in the military and in civilian life. After sharing his emotional story with participants, each of whom were moved or nearly moved to tears, Jeff identified special challenge he’s encountered even as his appellate legal case was successfully heard and granted by the U.S. Supreme Court. Highlights of his session include:

- Lack of available data on the number of military service members married to foreign spouses
- Nonexistence of resources especially for this issue as it is present in the military
- The special challenge of determining habitual residence among military families who often deploy and relocate multiple times during the course of service
- The impact of judicial discretion in custody matters especially concerning military families
- A disconnect between military and civilian courts regarding this issue
- Observations and circumstances that led to his newly-established nonprofit *Reuniting America’s Children* and its purpose to raise awareness and resources around the special challenges of our issue for military
- Brief discussion of his proposed “*Eris’ Law*”:

“a bill to amend the International Child Abduction and Retention Act (ICARA) by adding a Military Exemption to ICARA Providing a Statutory Definition for the Purpose of Determining Habitual Residence of a Child Under the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980)”.

Jeff’s presentation was followed by a discussion among participants about the impact of judicial discretion and a collective pledge *by iStand Parent Network* to support him in his personal case and to advocate as a coalition for Eris’ Law.

4:45 – 5:00 p.m. Reflections and Wrap up

Noelle concluded the *Inaugural iStand Parent Network Organizing Meeting & Embassy Walk* with an invitation to participants to formalize their participation with membership in the coalition. Participants also reflected on the significant and affirmative bonding that had occurred. The last consensual actions were to continue weekly conference calls and to recognize the need to continue the Organizing Meeting & Embassy Walk as an annual event. Participants agreed and set the date of March 25-27, 2015 for the next Meeting with governmental meetings and the Embassy Walk to commence on March 25, the Organizing Meeting to convene on March 26 and the optional Congressional Lobby Day on March 27. The Meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.

Friday, June 13, 2014 ~ Capitol Hill

iStand Parent Network Congressional Lobby Day

While most participants needed to return to their respective homes after Thursday’s adjournment, six parents and supporters, including STOP EXIT’s Liane Thompson, remained to visit legislators on Capitol Hill. Two parents paid calls to the staff members of their U.S. Senators with members STANDING in solidarity during those visits, and together the group visited the offices for the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The purpose of these visits was to introduce iStand Parent Network as a resource for expert testimony, personal

experiences and references to inform ongoing legislative efforts around the issues of international parental child abduction, wrongful removal and wrongful retention.

Challenges

Two significant **technology challenges** were identified during the June 12 meeting. **(1)** The Hotel Harrington manager had previously indicated that the conference room had the capacity for a conference call to permit persons who were unable to attend the meeting to participate via conference call. The evening before and morning of the conference, hotel staff attempted to accommodate this request, but it was discovered that the room had only analog capabilities that prevented a conference-type telephone from working in the room. We attempted to overcome this problem by using a participant's cellular phone during the morning session, but the callers' reported an inability to hear the introductions. Dr. Hunter terminated the call and posted a regrets message on *the iStand Parent Network* Facebook page.

The second **(2)** technology challenge was the considerable effort expended to SKYPE Meeting Presenter Bob Pfeifer in for his joint presentation with Parent Advocate Alissa Zagaris. George and Alissa worked Wednesday evening and Thursday morning to resolve the issue, and in the end, Bob Pfeifer was able to successfully communicate with meeting attendees. That session ultimately worked well with a high level of interaction between Bob in California, Alissa and meeting participants. However, both of these challenges are serious considerations going forward as meeting planners determine whether to use the Hotel Harrington for the March 2015 organizing meeting.

An additional challenge was the **expense** of taking taxis to and from Capitol Hill and the Embassy Walk. Future planning should identify public transit and factor in additional time necessary to get to events using this more cost effective means of travel.

Post Meeting Evaluation

Participants have been invited to complete an electronic post-meeting evaluation to inform planning for the next Meeting. The evaluation summary will be published as an addendum to this report at a future date.

Acknowledgments

iStand Parent Network acknowledges the following persons and entities who were instrumental in the success of our inaugural Meeting. In several cases, their contributions are a direct reflection of the Network in action.

Ms. Anna Babiolakis, Signarama

Mr. Scott Berne, Board of Directors, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, New York Branch

Mr. Sam Blackstone, Blackstone Risk Management, Inc.

SFC Jeff Chafin, U.S. Army

Miss Rysa Lee, Meeting Registrar

Dr. Noelle Hunter, iStand Parent Network Co-Founder

Honorable Mitch McConnell, U.S. Senate Minority Leader

Ms. Beth Payne, Director, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Children's Issues

Mr. Bob Pfeifer, Jerry's Army

Ms. Ann Terry, Manager, The Hotel Harrington, Washington DC

Ms. Liane Thompson, STOP EXIT

Alissa Zagaris, iStand Parent Network Co-Founder

ATTACHMENTS



Our Vision

***iStand Parent Network** is a coalition of parents and supporters of children who are internationally abducted, wrongfully removed or wrongfully retained from their countries of habitual residence. **iStand Parent Network** advocates for the rights of children, access rights for parents and for domestic and international policy reform that returns children home.*

Our Mission

- 1) To **STAND** together to urge the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Children's Issues to exert diplomatic pressure and elicit cooperation from nations where children are held, maintain strong and consistent casework reporting and response and enhance inter-agency cooperation for family reunification.
- 2) To press the U.S. Department of Justice to **STAND** with parents to enforce the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act of 1993, pursue criminal prosecution and negotiate plea agreements when warranted and enforce laws that protect parents and children and lead to safe returns.
- 3) To request the Department of Homeland Security **STAND** with us to prevent further abductions, and to implement and enforce exit controls at all U.S. borders and airports for children traveling abroad.
- 4) To educate Congress, asking that they **STAND** with parents to enact comprehensive laws that left behind parents can use to bring their children home.
- 5) To encourage the central authorities in other nations to **STAND** and act with urgency on matters of abduction, wrongful removal, wrongful retention and access rights.
- 6) To **STAND** together and educate family courts and officers on international parental child abduction risks and legal measures which courts should incorporate to mitigate risk.
- 7) To insist that signatories of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction **STAND** up and honor treaties and apply a consistent standard to resolve cases with diligence, transparency and urgency.
- 8) To **STAND** as a network and advocate for family rights. We work collectively to identify tools resources that support children's rights to be present in their parents' lives.
- 9) To **STAND** together as a collective and raise awareness of the psychological, emotional, financial and collateral damage caused by parental alienation.
- 10) To **STAND** as a collective to build a secure knowledge base that assists families in securing access rights, and resolving wrongful retention and wrongful removal.



iStand Parent Network

Committee Organization

Serving on a committee provides members opportunities to contribute to the work of the coalition in ways that match their skills, interests and time commitments. **iStand Parent Network** is organized through a **Steering Committee** that oversees and guide the work of the coalition. Representatives from the Steering Committee serve a lead role in **Standing Committees** that engage in the day-to-day work of the coalition. **Ad hoc project committees** may be formed to coordinate and implement coalition-sponsored and partner-collaborative projects.

Standing Committees

*Members of these committees should consist of representatives from a broad range of community sectors. Below are suggested **iSTAND Parent Network** standing committees.*

Parent Advocacy

The Parent Advocacy Committee ensures that all coalition actions are consisted with the stated ethics, protects the privacy of children and parents and advances the goals of peer support, abduction prevention, family reunification and multilevel policy reform.

Public Policy

The Public Policy Committee coordinates among coalition members, supporters and related organizations to monitor and cooperate with local, state, federal and international governmental entities to address and reduce the incidence of international parental child abduction, wrongful removal and wrongful retention.

Legal Reform

The Legal Reform Committee monitors case law, rulings and legal developments in domestic and international courts concerning international parental child abduction, wrongful removal and wrongful retention. It also works to educate family courts on prevention and mitigation of parental abduction and parental alienation.

Communications

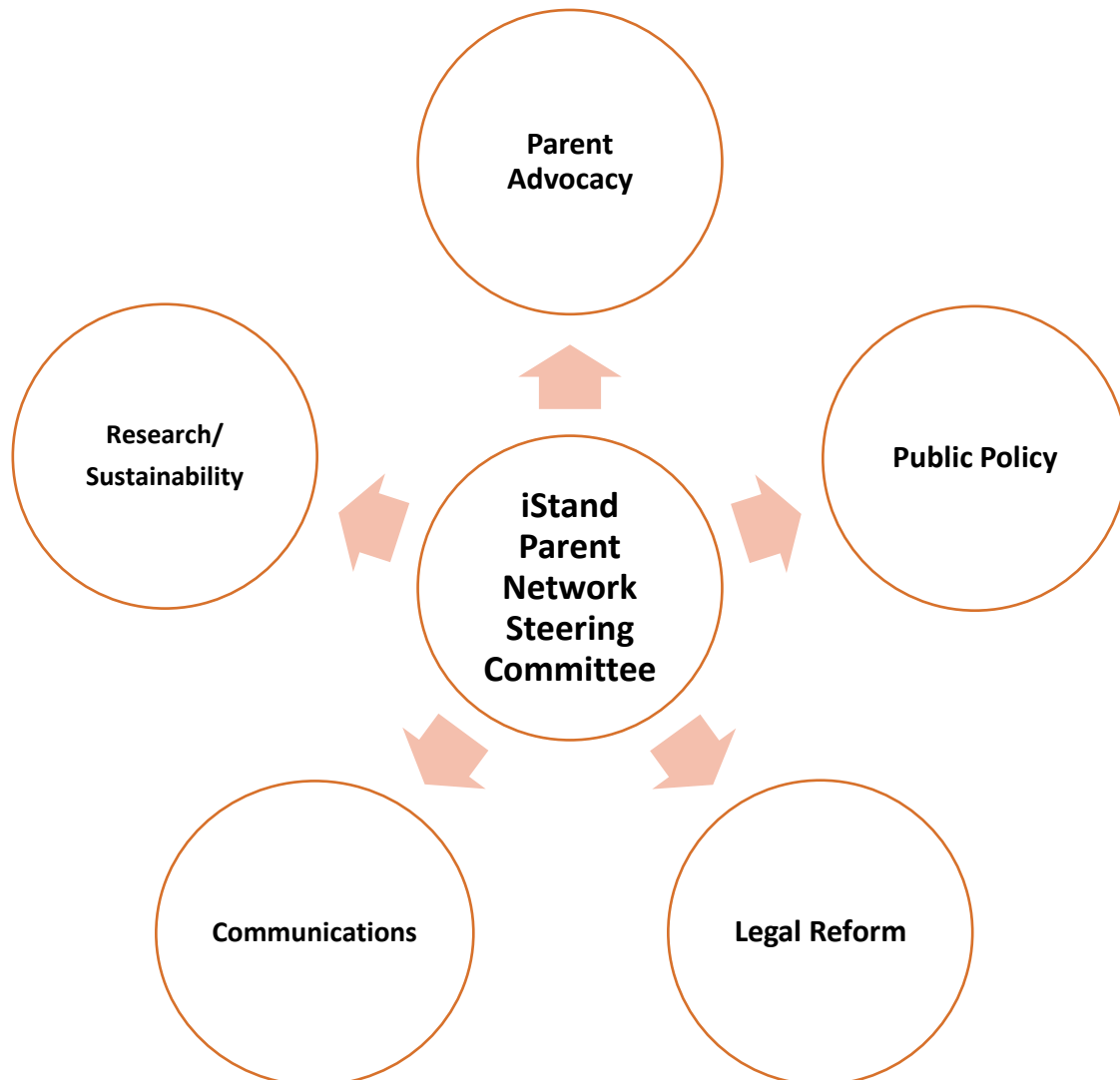
The Communications Committee keeps the mission and vision of the coalition in front of the public as much as possible through regular and event-oriented integrated marketing/communication, including convergent and emerging media and through publications.

Research/Sustainability

The Research/Sustainability Committee assembles, evaluates and disseminates relevant data that informs the work of the coalition. It may report aggregate data and produce original publications that inform key publics. The committee continuously seeks resources to sustain the organization's goals and initiatives.



Proposed organizational structure





iSTAND Parent Network Membership Agreement

Purpose: To be an active participant of the iSTAND Parent Network. The coalition member shall participate in the strategic planning and ongoing planning and implementation of initiatives designed to advance the goals of peer support, abduction prevention, family reunification and multilevel policy reform. The coalition member shall be responsible for the work of the coalition and will be actively engaged in the development and implementation of the coalition's work plan.

Duties:

1. Attend full coalition meetings and activities.
2. Become knowledgeable about the coalition and its work.
3. Attend and be an active participant on subcommittees as assigned by coalition chair.
4. Support the coalition chair with setting meetings, preparing agendas and shaping the specific work of the coalition in relation to the broad mission of the coalition as required.
5. Contribute to meetings by expressing own point of view.
6. Consider others' point of view, make constructive suggestions and help the full coalition make decisions that benefit those the coalition serves.
7. Represent the coalition to individuals, the public and other organizations.
8. Serve as an ambassador to the community.
9. Assume a leadership role as needed.
10. Support the ongoing process of recruiting new coalition members and community partners.



**iStand Parent Network
Membership Agreement**

Name _____

Preferred E-mail _____

- ___ I would like to become a member of the iSTAND Parent Network. In doing so, I understand that I will receive meeting reminders and minutes, notices of upcoming events, meetings, training opportunities and news alerts on pertinent issues related to the coalition's mission, objectives and goals.
- ___ I agree to honor the iSTAND Parent Network Code of Ethics in any capacity in which my affiliation with the organization is present.
- ___ Do you give permission to be identified as a member of the iSTAND Parent Network (by name and/or photo) in any print, radio, or television coverage? I Yes I No
- ___ I am not able to be an active member at this time, but would be willing to serve as a supporter, providing technical assistance and/or materials related to the following topics: _____
- ___ I am not able to be an active member at this time, but would like to be added to the extended emailing list to receive notice of upcoming events, meetings, training opportunities, progress reports, etc.

Signature _____

Date _____



iStand Parent Network
Inaugural Organizing Meeting
June 12, 2014
The Hotel Harrington – 1st Floor Conference Room
Conference at-a-glance

Time	Session
9:00 – 10:00 am	Coffee Meet & Greet
10:00 – 11:15 am	Welcome iStand Parent Network Vision, Mission, Goals <i>Dr. Noelle Hunter – Mission4Muna</i> <i>Alissa Zagaris –Leo’s Mom & Parent Advocate</i>
11:15 – 11:30 am	Break
11:30 – 12:45 pm	Social Media 101 <i>Bob Pfeifer - Jerry’s Army</i>
12:45 - 2:00 pm	In Pursuit of Our Children* <i>Sam Blackstone- Blackstone Risk Management</i>
2:00 – 3:15 pm	Extraordinary Circumstances <i>Scott Berne</i>
3:15 – 3:30 pm	Break
3:30 – 4:45 pm	Eris’ Story <i>US Army SFC Jeff Chafin</i>
4:45 – 5:00 pm	Wrap up – Next Steps

The Organizing Meeting is open via conference call with the exception of the closed session with Sam Blackstone.

Additional Information:

Wednesday, June 11

Department of State, 600 19th Street NW, Washington DC 20431 (South Entrance closest to intersection of 19th & F St. NW)

8:30 am Meet up to enter State Dept for 9:00 meeting with CI, Director Beth Payne

10:50 am Group photograph with Senator McConnell, **317 Senate Russell Building**

11:00 – 12: 00 Visit Senate Committee on Foreign Relations members

12:45 – Meet at Hotel Harrington conference room (1st floor) for Embassy Walk assembly

1:00 – 3:00 Embassy Walk

Hotel Information: Hotel Harrington,

436 11th St NW, Washington, DC 20004 (11th & E streets NW)

Front Desk (202) 628-8140

Transportation/Parking:

Hotel Harrington is 2 blocks from FEDERAL TRIANGLE and METRO Center Metro Stations

Hotel Parking is \$16/day. Garage is 4 blocks from hotel. Unlimited in & out

Weather: 30% chance of rain every day of meeting. Also remember that DC can get pretty muggy.

Emergency Contacts: Noelle, 606-356-8371; Alissa, 317-730-6080