

Equity in permanency planning: Resources for children with cross-border case needs

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Before we begin



This webinar will be recorded and shared with you.



Submit your questions via chat.



Please complete our survey at the end of the webinar.

Our mission



Raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system.



Assist US states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, develop and support foster and adoptive families.



International
Social Service
USA

Equity in permanency planning: Resources for children with cross-border case needs

ISS-USA and international permanency planning:

The basics





Polls



Have you worked on a case where there was a family member overseas?

Yes

No

I don't know



Polls



The needs of children are better served in the US, regardless of their family situation.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree



Polls



I am confident in my ability to help find and engage with a child's potential family resources outside of the US.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE NETWORK



FOUNDED IN 1924, THE ISS NETWORK HAS BEEN CONNECTING CROSS BORDER FAMILIES IN OVER 130 COUNTRIES ACROSS THE GLOBE FOR NEARLY A CENTURY!

ISS-USA: WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

U.S. Repatriation Program

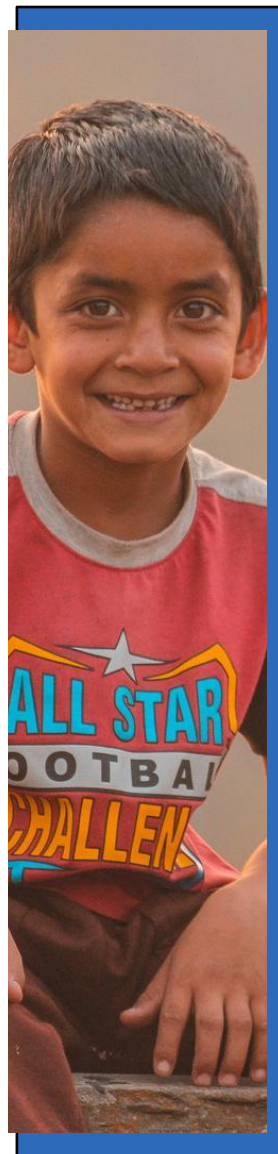
**Intercountry Case
Management**

Specialty Programs

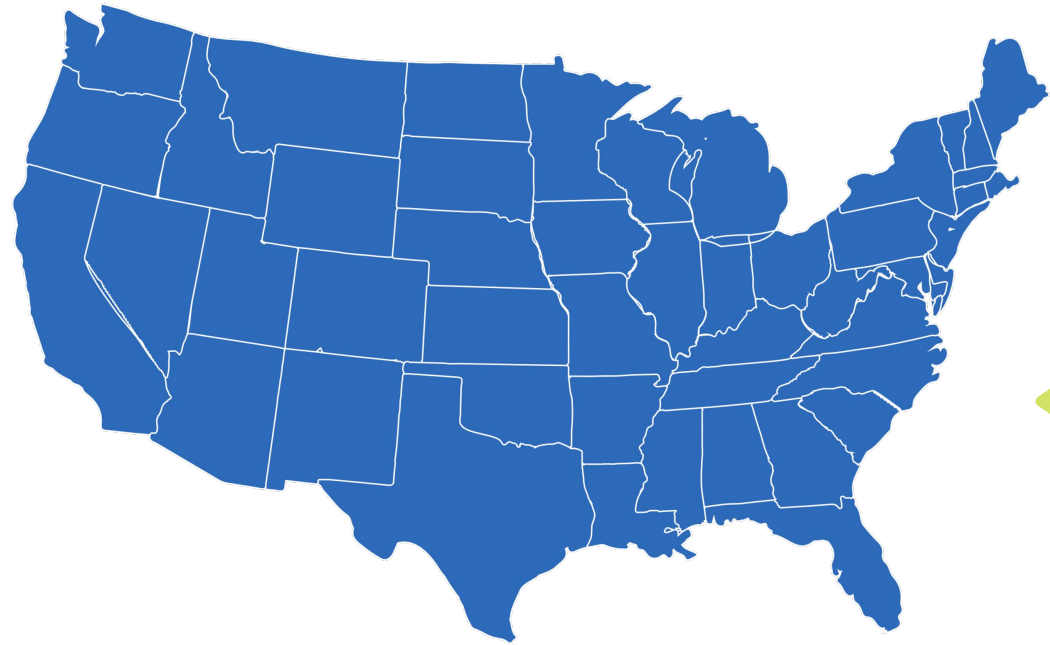
Technical Assistance

Mission

ISS-USA's mission is to mobilize a domestic and international network of legal and social work professionals to efficiently connect vulnerable children, adults and families separated by international borders to the services and support they need.



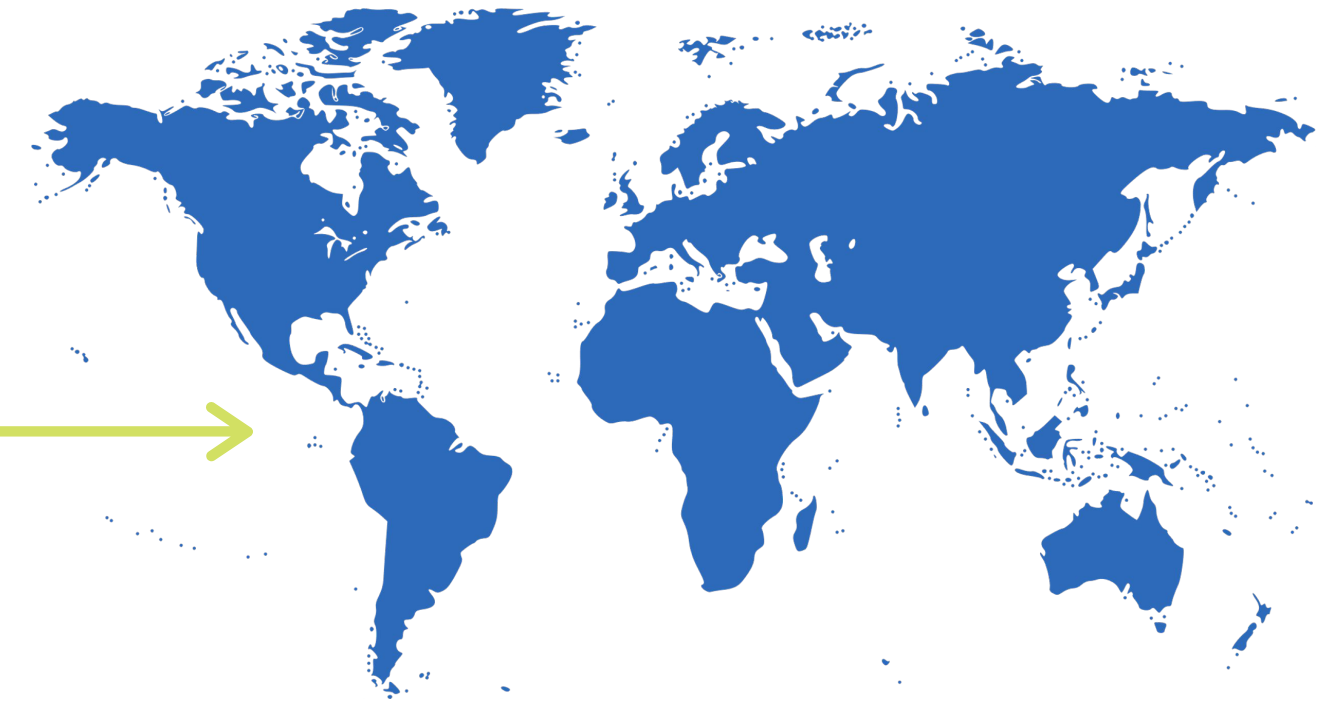
ISS-USA case management: How it works



**Domestic
Contact**



**ISS-USA
Case Manager**



**ISS Overseas Unit
or State Entity**

International permanency planning: A best practice

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

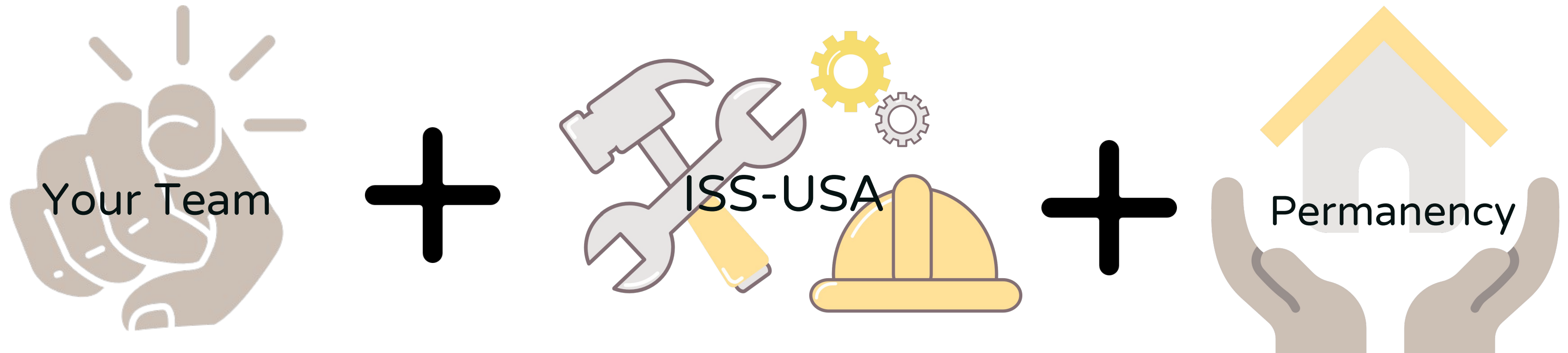
“...provides that, within 30 days after the removal of a child from the custody of a parent or parents of the child, **the State shall exercise due diligence to identify and provide notice to all adult grandparents and other adult relatives of the child** (including any other adult relatives suggested by the parents), subject to exceptions due to family or domestic violence...”

Achieving Permanency for the Well-being of Children and Youth (ACYF-CB-IM-20-09)

"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.**"

Permanency planning = Best practice in helping kids find permanency with family, regardless of where they reside

ISS = A resource available to any agency working toward that goal



Our Services ARE:



Objective and impartial



Reimbursable through title IV-E funds (sometimes)



A resource to anyone working on international case work

Our Services ARE NOT:



Free (or covered as a grantee of AUSK)



Affiliated with any government entity or foreign government

Children with international family:

The scope



Who are we talking about?

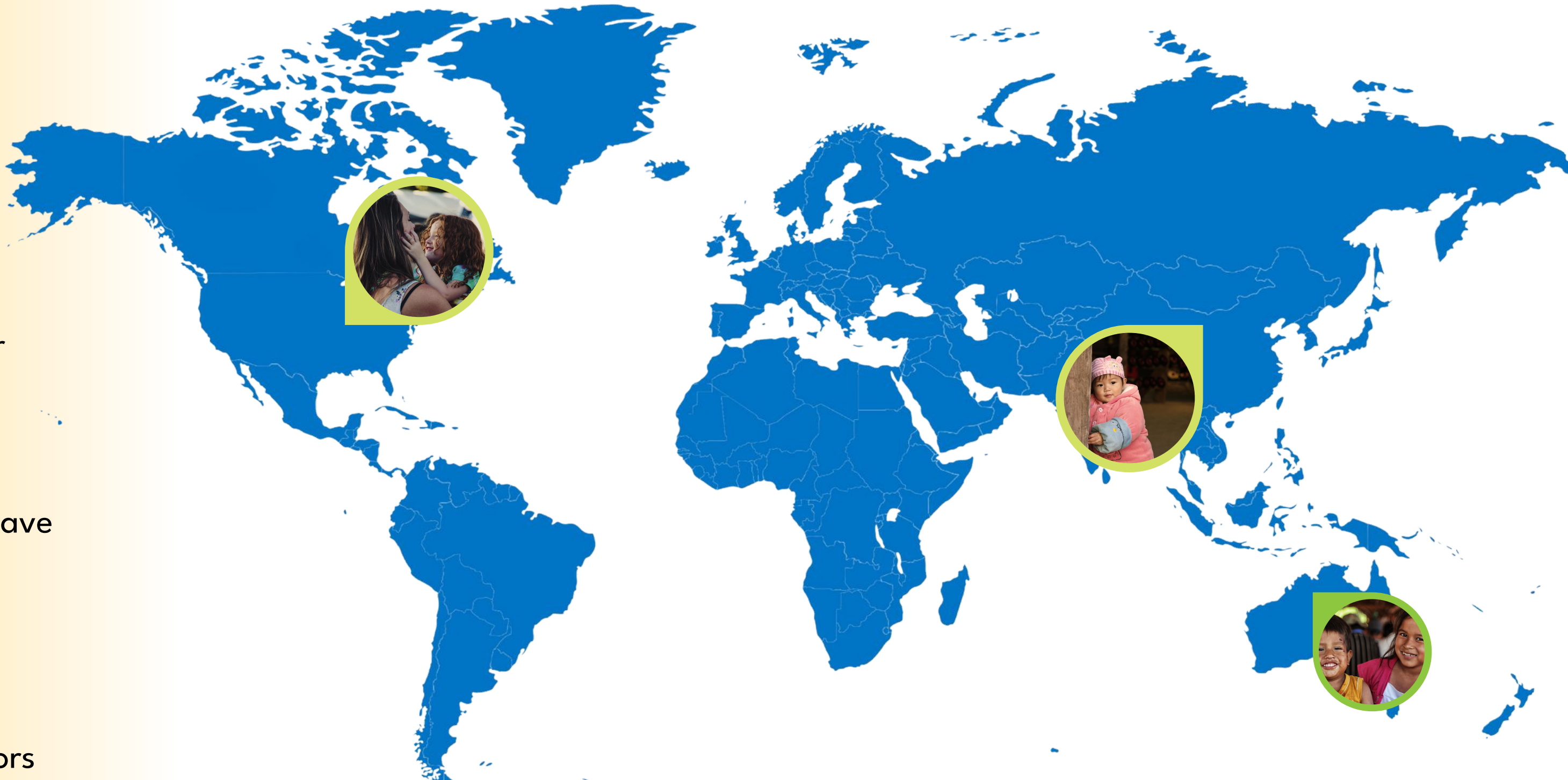
Families on the Move

~ 280m people live outside their country 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 US 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 407,493 children in the US foster care system have family connections overseas.

Barriers to equity in family reunification

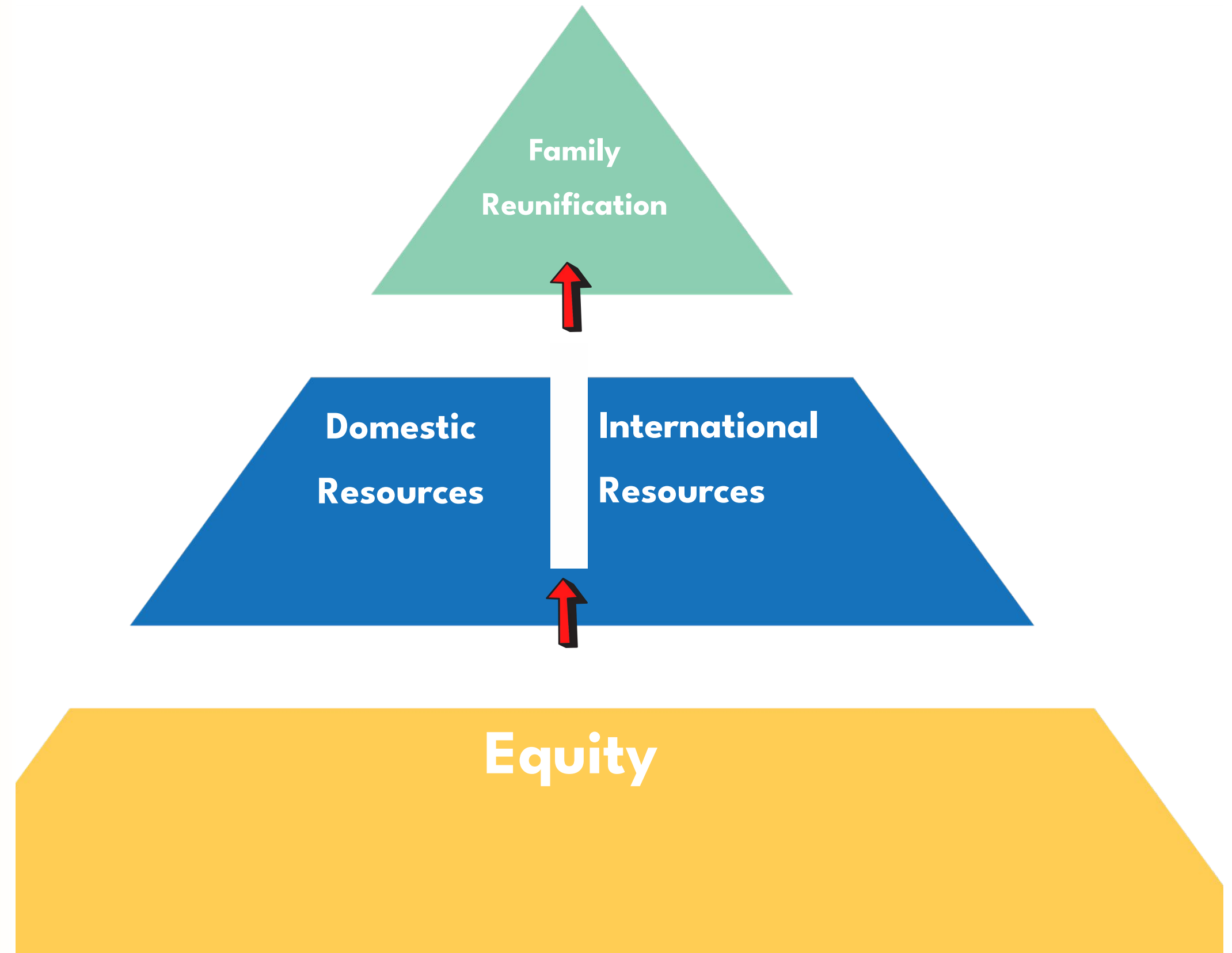
ISS-USA research has found that there is a:

Lack of knowledge of cross-border or international placements

Lack of policies related to international family finding and engagement

Lack of comfort in conducting diligent search for family overseas

Belief that family court judges would not be willing to consider placement with a parent or relative



[Read more about our work on Equity in Permanency](#)

Awareness of policies

ISS-USA exploratory research found that of respondents to a national survey of child welfare professionals, 84-90% were very familiar with the terms:

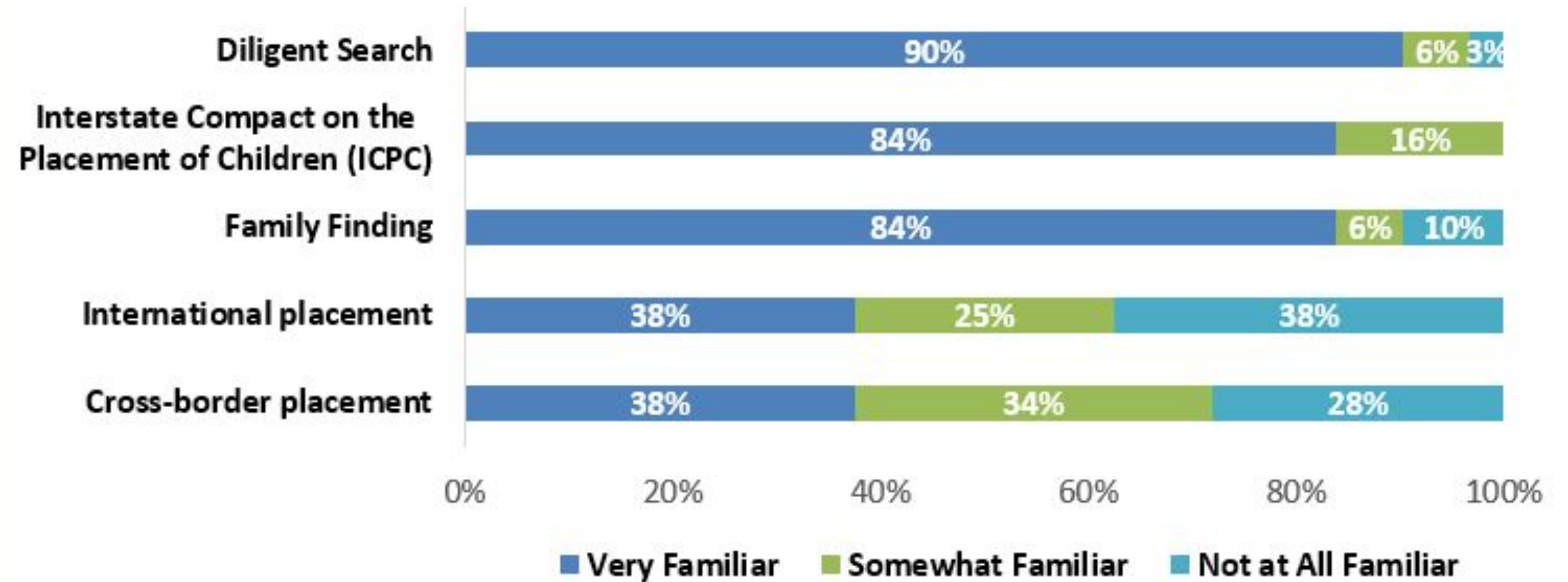
Diligent Search,

Family Finding,

Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC).

There was far less familiarity with cross-border placement or international placement.

What factors drive permanency decisions when there is an international component?



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.**

What we do (and don't) know about cross-border permanency planning:

The why



Research from MPLD fellowship



Bias in case practice

What does equitable access to kin mean for children with international family?

- Are domestic familial connections more important than international familial connections? Let's talk about it.
- Traumatized youth vs. successful adult
- Biases of the decision makers in child welfare
- Building bridges between child welfare agencies and stakeholders to engage in best interest determinations
- Best case practices

Case scenario



Benefits of international permanency planning

Family connections can:

- Give children resources
- Connect to culture, language, traditions
- Strengthen sense of identity
- Strengthen the extended family



The benefits of a family connection are the same whether it is a domestic or international.

Tips for culturally responsive permanency planning

Child welfare agencies must continue to consider the following:

- Safety and protection are paramount
- Separation from family can cause trauma in adults and children
- International connections are just as important as domestic
- A commitment to a child's best interest > checking a box

Have you asked the kids you are working with about all family resources?

Case scenario: Opportunities for connection



Case scenario



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.

Discussion



What do you want to
know?



What do you do
next?



What comes to
mind?




Case scenario



Maria is a US 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.

A hand is shown placing a wooden block on top of a stack of three other wooden blocks. The blocks are light-colored wood and are set against a background of a blue sky with white clouds. The blocks are resting on a pile of sand. The hand is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt.

Concurrent Planning is an integral part of permanency planning regardless of where family resides.

There are also lots of services that can support a range of permanency goals.

ISS-USA is a neutral party but we can provide services that help decision makers.

Services available through ISS-USA:

The what



ISS-USA roadmap

"I'm working with a child with international family and I don't know where to start."

Contact our information inbox by emailing question@iss-usa.org.

Technical assistance is FREE! Please let us help!

"First of all, I don't know where the family is or if they even want the child. Do they even want to be involved?"

If their location is known, we can provide notification of child in care, participate in meetings, and/or share legal docs.

If their location is unknown, we can conduct a person tracing.



"I have concerns based on what I know about the family's history."

ISS-USA can conduct a...

- Community Resource assessment
- DNA testing
- Drug testing

"I don't know if they can really take care of her."

ISS-USA can conduct a...

- Home study for visitation
- Home study for parental reunification
- Home study for kinship placement
- Other





"Will the court even accept this? What do I tell the judge?"

Professional network
ISS as neutral; objective information to make informed decisions

"Plus, with her citizenship status.... "

ISS-USA provides services for US-born and foreign-born children.
We DO NOT provide immigration services or legal services.

"And if they decide to send her, then what? How do I get her there? What if she needs to come back?"

ISS-USA can provide...

- Travel assistance
- Post placements



Permanency with Family

"But why is it so expensive? How can I get this paid for? "

We take this work on for you, so you don't have to do the searching, coordination, etc. We're working with professionals who are experts in this field.

Title IV-E funds may also allow for the state to be responsible for fees.

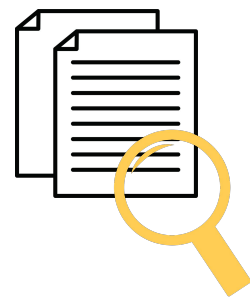
How can ISS-USA help?



Services in support of equitable permanency planning for children in transnational families

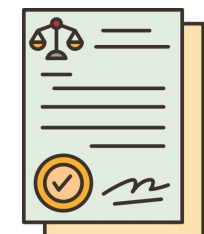


Person Tracing



Document Tracing

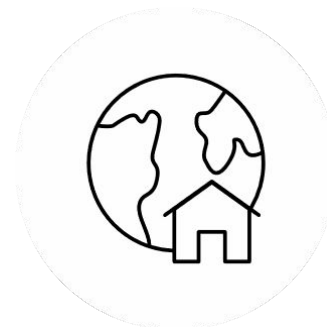
(birth certificate, death certificate, etc.)



**Notification of child in care, or
sharing of legal documents**



**Involve international family members in
Family Team Meetings and
other permanency planning activities**



International home studies



DNA/Paternity Testing



**Community Resource
Assessments**



Psychological Assessments



Child Welfare Checks



**Post Placement
Follow up**



**Travel Assistance
-Repatriation
Assistance**



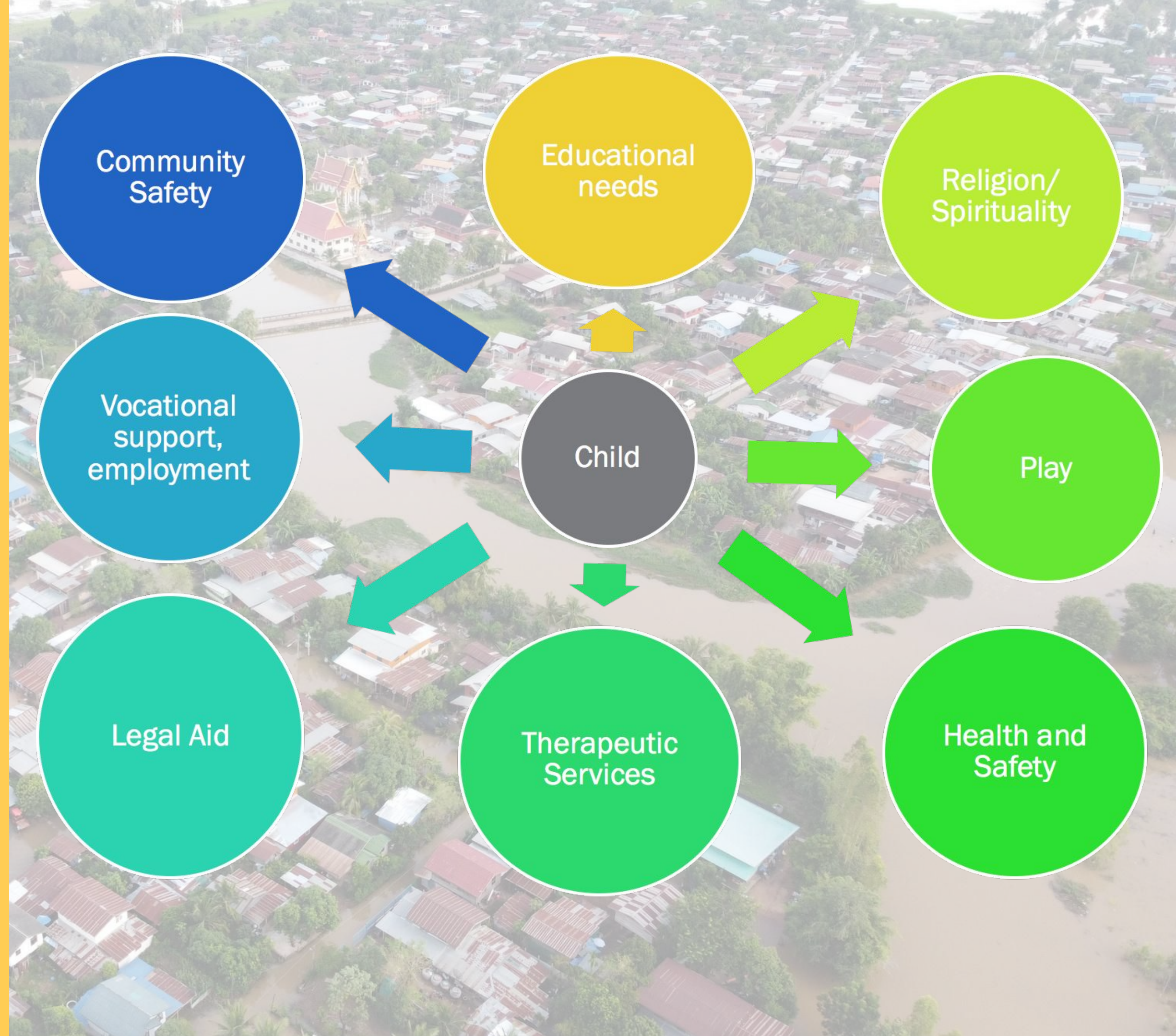
**Training and
Technical Assistance**

Community resource assessments

Assessment tool

Planning tool

Child specific



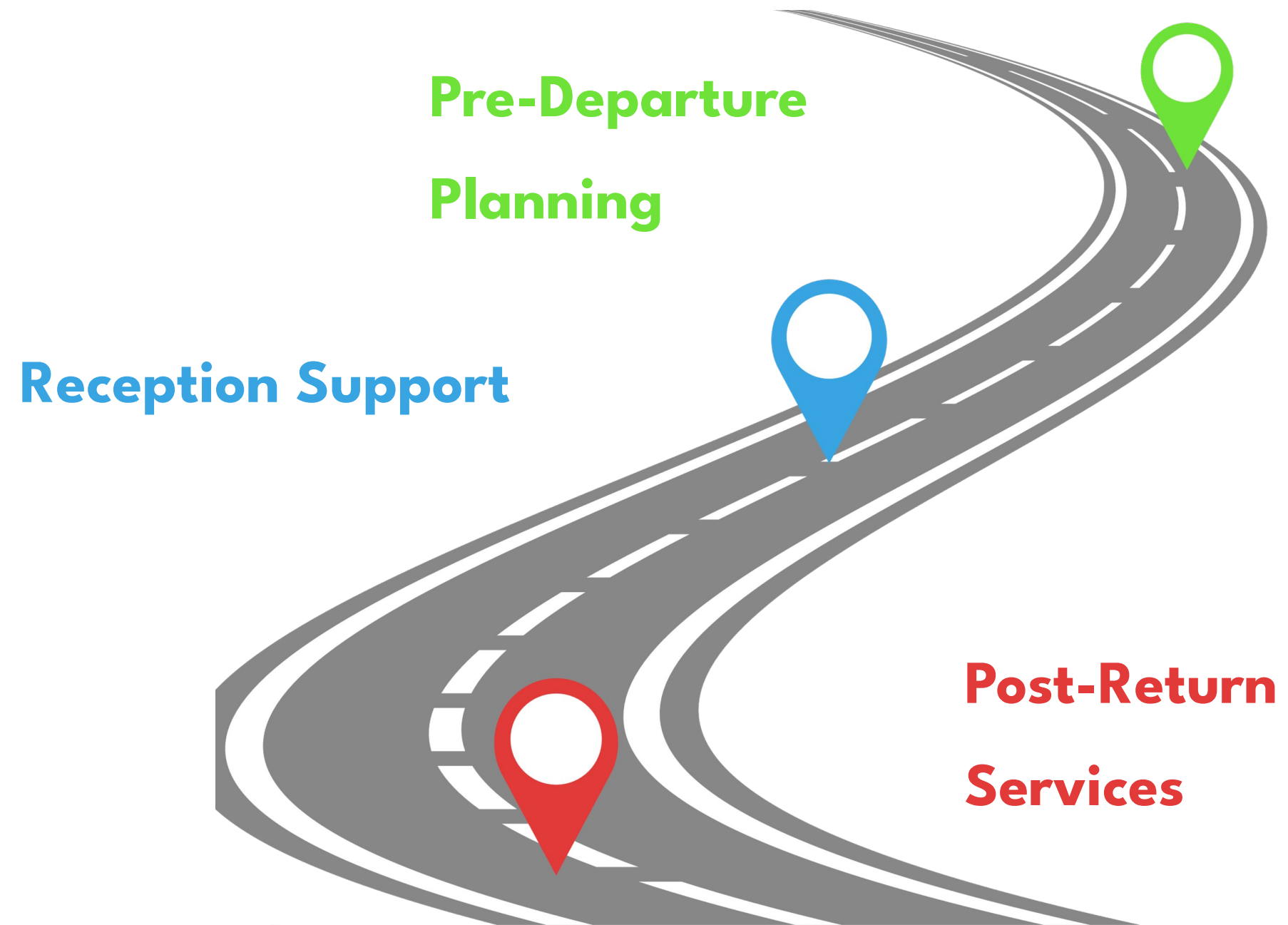
Return & reintegration



ISS-USA offers repatriation and reintegration services that support families before, during and after reunification.

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

Return and Reintegration services should be part of concurrent planning.



Putting the process into practice :

The how



ISS-USA case management: The process



ISS-USA

Service Coordinator

Open & assigned to case manager

Invoice & payment

Scope of work

Referral

ISS-USA

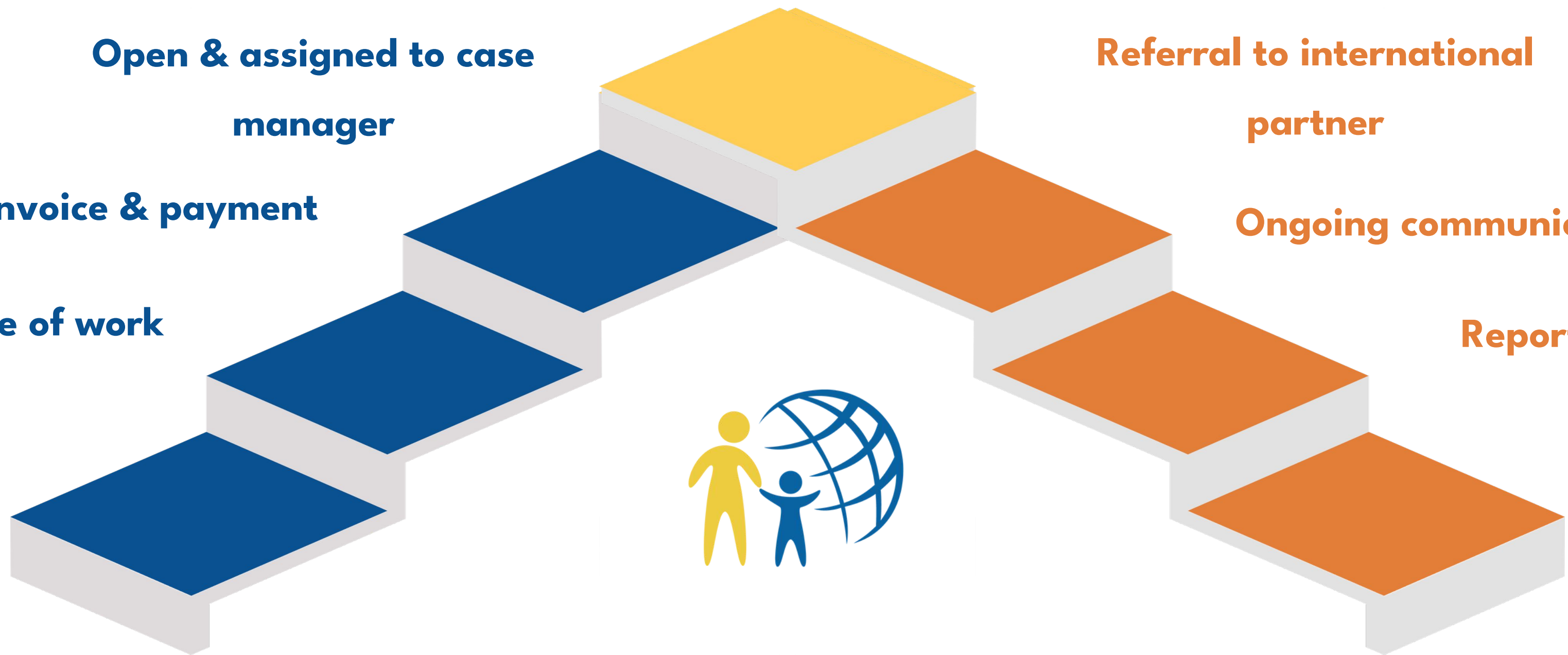
Case Manager

Referral to international partner

Ongoing communication

Report

Close



Contracts and fees

What's covered:

- **ISS-USA Case Manager**
- **Foreign Partner's time**
- **Foreign Partner's travel**
- **Fees associated with processing documents**

Benefits:

- **ISS network partners are vetted**
- **Caseworkers do not need to spend time seeking and coordinating services overseas**
- **Often faster than work obtained through consulates**
- **Availability of follow up services & connection to local resources**

Other frequently asked questions



- **One service = One case**
- **ISS international partners =
Local professionals**
- **Time depends on many
factors**





**International
Social Service
USA**

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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

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