

I) Executive Summary

The project, *Expanded Options for Permanency: International Family Finding for U.S. Children in the NJ Foster Care System*, was a widely successful demonstration project designed to increase the number of family connections and improve permanency outcomes for children in the New Jersey foster care system that have family connections outside of the United States (See Appendix A for a list of services and safety, permanency and well-being outcomes). The project was a collaboration between three entities: Rutgers University School of Social Work, New Jersey's public child welfare agency, the Department of Children and Families Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), and International Social Service USA Branch (ISS-USA). ISS-USA was the lead agency for the project.

The project was based on demographic data indicating that there were potentially as many as 1500 children in the care of DCP&P with international family connections, but the agency was only referring between 60-80 cases each year to ISS-USA. It was proposed that with increased training, written policy and protocols, and a dedicated staff person to provide assistance to DCP&P staff as they work through the process of identifying and referring cases, DCP&P workers would: 1) be better able to identify which children had international family connections, and 2) refer those cases to ISS-USA for family finding and engagement services. The project was a distinctive blend of training, policy implementation, case practice development, and intensive evaluation of two intervention models designed to improve case workers' knowledge of resources available to assist in locating family for children in the care of DCP&P. The project aimed to identify possible barriers to international family finding and engagement and create clear paths to overcome those obstacles.

Because the state of New Jersey's child welfare case practice model already included family finding, the project focused upon expanding the family finding process by: 1) building awareness and knowledge around the growing number of children in New Jersey who have family connections outside the U.S.; 2) the importance of including family resources outside the U.S. in the permanency planning process; and 3) the resources available to DCP&P staff when a child has an international dimension to their case. This Fostering Connections demonstration project sought to accomplish the following objectives: 1) develop a

standard protocol for identifying children who may have potential family placement overseas; 2) refer these children to ISS-USA; 3) undertake intensive family-finding efforts; 4) evaluate potential family for their ability to provide a safe and permanent home; and 5) provide post-placement follow-up for those cases that result in a permanent placement.

Because of the unique nature of the project there were two populations served over the course of the grant. First, DCP&P staff were provided with training on identifying and working with children who have international family connections and exposure to an awareness campaign highlighting the services of ISS-USA. This training improved DCP&P staff's professional capacity to serve children more effectively. Second, the children referred to ISS-USA over the tenure of the project were afforded an increased range of permanency options because of the international family finding component of their cases. Approximately 520 children received services during the three year period in 54 separate countries.

The project began with the development of curriculum for a day long training program aimed at DCP&P social work staff working directly with children at all phases of the permanency planning process. Simultaneously, the evaluation team developed a pre- and post-training survey and a longitudinal knowledge transfer and retention survey. DCP&P developed a job description and advertised for the International Liaison (IL) position which was created under the grant, and began reviewing internal policy related to cases involving an international component. Finally, ISS-USA revised their case practice protocol and data collection techniques to ensure fidelity to the project and provide reliable outcome data. Training began in Year One. Approximately 220 DCP&P workers as well as 50 judicial and legal providers were trained over the course of this portion of the project.

There was a shift away from the focus on training after the evaluation team analyzed the pre- and post-training data and the data being generated from the longitudinal knowledge transfer and retention data. Though ISS-USA saw a slight increase in referrals from DCP&P, analyses of the pre- and post-training data and longitudinal knowledge transfer and retention data determined that staff was not retaining information provided in ISS-USA training. At this time there was a change in the project design to include an awareness campaign based on information gathered in four focus groups that allowed the

project to gather additional insight into what barriers to international family finding still existed among the DCP&P staff.

The awareness campaign involved the DCP&P IL visiting each of the 42 local DCP&P offices and doing a short presentation to the staff. At the conclusion of the presentation every worker was given a poster highlighting the need to ask every family about international connections, the available intercountry case management services, and included contact information for the IL. ISS-USA collected data about which local DCP&P office referred each case which allowed the evaluation team to track the impact of the campaign. It was determined that the awareness campaign was far more successful than the more intensive training which was illustrated by a growing number of referrals for service to ISS-USA. The focus group data also indicated that training was not the most effective way to change case worker practice or beliefs.

Expanded Options for Permanency: International Family Finding for U.S. Children in the NJ Foster Care System had multiple positive outcomes. At the conclusion of the project the International Liaison became a permanent position at DCP&P. In addition, DCP&P finalized and implemented a written policy on cases with an international component and is considering additional awareness campaigns next year. The success of the project has prompted an additional training program for New Jersey legal and judicial partners in the permanency planning process. Finally, the number of referrals to ISS-USA for service in foreign countries continues to increase.

II) Overview of the Community, Population and Needs

International Social Service- United States of America Branch (ISS-USA) is a 501(c)(3) agency, based in Baltimore, MD. ISS-USA was incorporated in 1926 to promote outcomes in the best interest of children and families separated by international borders. ISS-USA provides services in all 50 states and some territories. ISS-USA is a part of the ISS Federation, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The ISS General Secretariat (ISS-GS), of which ISS-USA is a member, is an international non-governmental organization that encompasses a network of units in over 120 countries. The Federation is comprised of over 3,000 staff and volunteers internationally, and offers assistance every year to more than 10,000 children and families who are separated by international borders. The Federation also works in cooperation with other international organizations to promote best practices and the child's best interest in all endeavors involving children crossing international borders. Recent activity of the Federation includes the launching of *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'* and the publication of *Investigating the Grey Zones of Intercountry Adoption*. The services of the ISS network include the provision of social and legal services to protect unaccompanied minors, neglected and abandoned children, conducting family searches, facilitating family reunification and repatriation, providing legal assistance and individual counseling, and conducting research and training. All these activities are based on the accepted international conventions related to international child protection and advocacy including The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Hague Abduction, Hague Adoption and Hague 1996.

The mission of ISS-USA 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 seeks to achieve its mission by:

- Providing knowledge leadership, cutting-edge training and expert technical assistance to government agencies, social welfare organizations and the legal profession;
- Coordinating the provision of social services for Americans abroad and others in distress
- Building the domestic and international capacity of social welfare and legal professionals to meet the cross-border needs of children, adults and families.

In addition to providing case management services on cases originating within the United States that require service overseas, and cases originating in a foreign country that require service in the U.S., ISS-USA also acts as the contractor to the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement for repatriation services for American citizens being returned from overseas. Between the two programs, Intercountry Case Management and Repatriation, the staff of ISS-USA provides service to over 650 individuals and families each year. In addition, the Arthur C. Helton Institute provides technical assistance to nearly 1000 individuals and agencies each year.

ISS-USA's Arthur C. Helton Institute for the Study of International Social Service (The Institute) at ISS-USA was founded in 2007. The purpose of the Institute is to conduct research and provide training and technical assistance on issues related to children separated from their families across borders. The Institute is dedicated to providing comprehensive data on a variety of international and interjurisdictional child protection and permanency issues in order to promote evidence based practice in the social work, legal and judicial arenas. The Institute was the section of ISS-USA that oversaw all activities of the Fostering Connections Discretionary Grant. The Institute is also responsible for the development of training curricula, the presentation of trainings, conference presentations and conference planning, dissemination of information about the work of ISS-USA, all data collection related to the work of ISS-USA, and various research consultancies and provision of technical assistance. Recent projects include a grant from the Children in Court Program in New Jersey to conduct four trainings for judges, Guardians Ad Litem, lawyers, parent representatives and related legal and judicial personnel on best practices in internal family finding and engagement, and a USAID Toolkit on Strengthening Case Management in Child Protection Systems in the E & E Region. The Institute also advocates for best practices in interjurisdictional permanency planning and child protection through publications, speaking engagements, and social media.

The *Expanded Options for Permanency: International Family Finding for U.S. Children in the NJ Foster Care System* project was state-wide, encompassing urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state. This included all 21 counties and the 42 local offices of DCP&P. Eligibility for the project was open to

any child currently in the care of DCP&P. Referrals were received from all counties in the state, with no obvious differences between primarily rural and primarily urban counties.

In 2006, only 14.5% of children in out-of-home care in the state of New Jersey were living with relatives, which is significantly less than the national average of approximately 25%. Although the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 requires that every effort be made to locate and support appropriate family members, regardless of their country of residence, children with potential kinship placement outside of the United States are not afforded the same due diligence in searching for family as children who have potential domestic placements. These contextual conditions were two of the underlying factors for pursuing this Fostering Connections demonstration project. In addition, the project was based on the belief that the number of children in New Jersey who had potential family connections outside of the country was far higher than the number of cases referred to ISS-USA for intercountry case management from New Jersey each year.

This project also sought to address a growing problem across the country of many public child welfare agencies only sporadically undertaking international family finding activities and often only when there is knowledge that the family member resides outside of the United States. Based on preliminary research undertaken for the grant, there was no indication that states or counties were actively inquiring about potential international family resources and connections except when a child “looked” or “sounded” like they were from a foreign country. Anecdotal information from other states indicated that even when a child was thought to, or known to, have international family connections there is often an outright refusal to undertake family finding because it is too “difficult” or too “time consuming.” Furthermore, when family is located in another state or country, there are no guidelines in most agencies on how to include them in the permanency planning process.

ISS-USA has had a working relationship and a contract for services in New Jersey for at least 15 years. Based on previous work by ISS-USA with child welfare workers in New Jersey, it was clear that while some individual case workers were contacting ISS-USA and requesting intercountry case management services related to international family finding, it was happening in a piecemeal fashion.

Therefore, New Jersey was seen as an ideal partner because: 1) there was some knowledge among case workers and supervisors regarding the need for exploring international family connections, 2) New Jersey had a successful family finding case practice model that had been in place for several years before the project began, and 3) New Jersey and ISS-USA had a long standing working relationship that allowed for good communication. What was lacking in New Jersey was a state-wide policy requiring international case management services, and specific protocols and procedures to help case workers understand how to proceed when they had a case with an international dimension. The project intended to improve case workers' ability to identify children with international family connections more quickly, and in more cases, through standardized case practice activities. This allowed for a quasi-experimental evaluation to determine which strategies and supports were most effective in helping child welfare workers undertake international family finding and engagement.

Because the state of New Jersey's child welfare case practice model already included family finding, the project focused upon expanding the family finding process by: 1) building awareness and knowledge around the growing number of children in New Jersey who have family connections outside the U.S., 2) the importance of including family resources outside the U.S. in the permanency planning process, and 3) the resources available to DCP&P staff when a child has an international dimension to their case. This Fostering Connections demonstration project sought to accomplish the following objectives: 1) develop a standard protocol for identifying children who may have potential family placement overseas; 2) refer these children to ISS-USA; 3) undertake intensive family-finding efforts; 4) evaluate potential family for their ability to provide a safe and permanent home; and 5) provide post-placement follow-up for those cases that result in a permanent placement.

This project served a number of key populations. The first is the population of children in the care of the state of New Jersey who have family connections outside of the United States. This included children who were born outside the U.S. and have family in their home country, children born in the U.S. to one or both foreign born parents who have extended family in the parents' home country(ies), and children born in the U.S. to U.S. born parents who have American citizen family members living overseas (military,

retirement, working for a multinational company, etc.). While there is no reliable data on the number of children in the American foster care system who have international family connections, we estimate based on an aggregate of the above noted populations of children that at least 1 in 4 children in foster care have a family connection in a foreign country. In New Jersey because of the very large immigrant population, and the presence of military families our estimate is that at least 1 in 3 children in New Jersey have a family connection outside the U.S. These children have family connections in all parts of the world as was evidenced by the fact that services were sought in 54 different countries over the course of the three years.

The second population served through this project was staff of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) including legal professionals who work within the Division. The staff was served through increased training, the development of an in-house support person, increased awareness of resources to assist in cases with an international dimension, and unlimited access to technical assistance and international social service services over the life of the grant. A needs assessment was sent to all DCP&P employees (N=3,000) to gauge existing attitudes and beliefs about interjurisdictional family-finding and permanency planning. Second, staff from eight counties (a mix of rural, sub-urban and urban) in New Jersey received training on international family-finding and was asked to participate in longitudinal data collection around their retention of the knowledge gained. 124 DCP&P personnel participated in the trainings and represented eight different counties. These counties were Burlington, Cumberland, Gloucester, Sussex, Passaic, Somerset, Hudson, and Middlesex. For evaluation purposes these counties were paired with a non-trained county similar in demographic indicators to ascertain the impact of the training on the number of children identified with international family resources, and the number of referrals for service for these children. Focus groups were held with 45 individuals, some of whom were trained, and some who were not, to better understand the differences in understanding international family finding and engagement between those staff that had received training and those that had not.

During the second half of the project, all DCP&P staff was exposed to a state-wide awareness campaign about international family finding and identifying children with possible international family connections. The purpose of the Awareness Campaign was to gauge the impact of these short meetings at which a visual aid was distributed to all DCP&P employees reminding them to ask every client about international family connections in comparison with the more in-depth day-long trainings. Finally, toward the end of the project a second state-wide survey was given to all DCP&P employees.

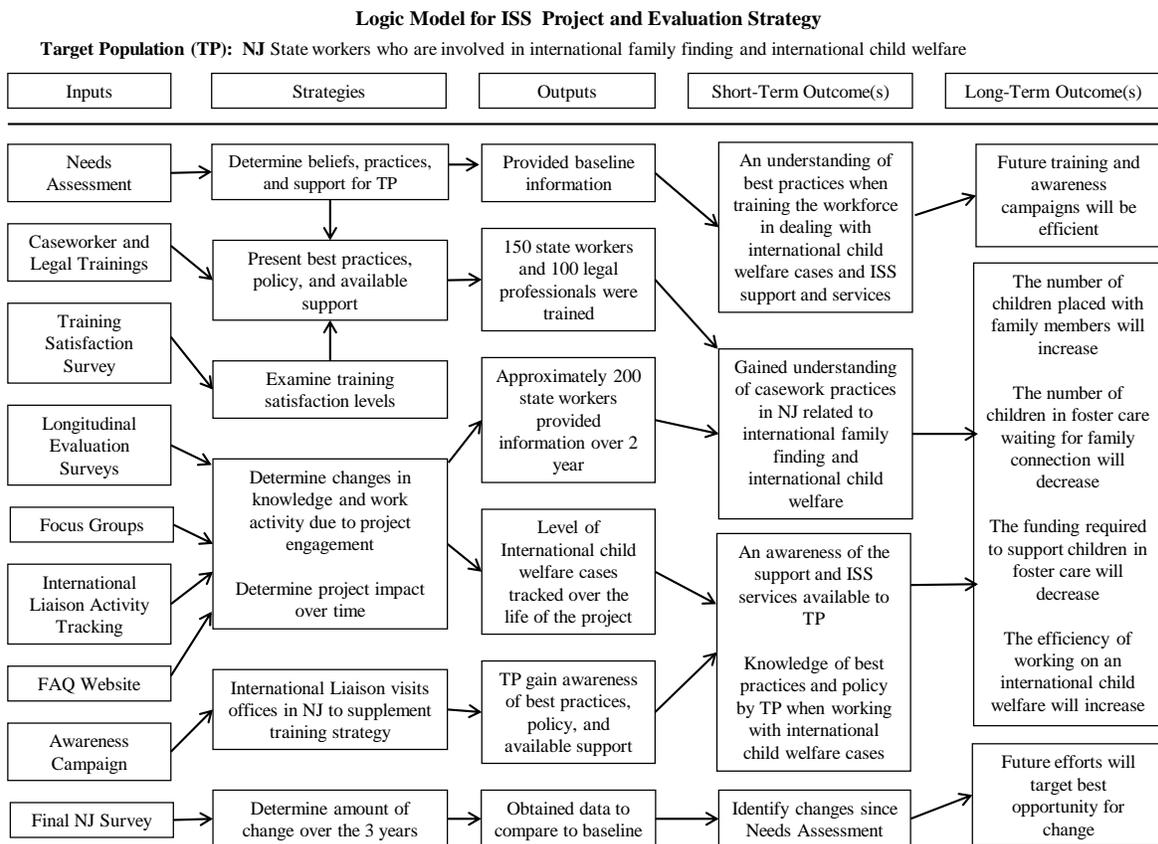
III) Overview of the Program Model

The purpose of this project was to improve permanency options for children in the New Jersey foster care system by developing and implementing intensive family-finding and related services for all children who have potential kinship connections outside the U.S. A standard protocol was developed for 1) identifying children who may have potential family connections and resources overseas, 2) referring these children to ISS-USA, 3) undertaking intensive family finding efforts, 4) evaluating potential family for their ability to provide a safe and permanent home, and 5) providing post-placement follow-up for those cases that result in a permanent placement. In addition, ISS-USA provided other services to facilitate the permanency plan for those children with international family connections. In some cases, facilitating the termination of parental rights meant that a child was more quickly freed for adoption; in others, facilitating Notification of a Child in care found additional potential resources for the child. The project examined if, and what, barriers exist that prevent social workers, lawyers and judges from diligently searching for and engaging family overseas of children in the U.S. While the project began with an assumption that case workers, lawyers and judges might simply be resisting placing children overseas, as the project developed it became obvious that it wasn't just hesitancy to place, but was a complete lack of understanding of the resources available to help with international family finding, and confusion about when or if to undertake family finding outside of the country were barriers to properly handling cases with an international dimension.

The project developed a standard training curriculum for both social service and legal providers on best practices in international permanency planning and guidelines for working in the best interest of

children in these complex cases. During the course of the project the data clearly indicated that the training did not have the impact that was expected so the project developed a new strategy for disseminating information and training materials that was far more successful. Data shows that the Awareness Campaign was far more successful in encouraging case workers to ask about international family resources, and for case workers to refer those cases for service to ISS-USA. The project concluded with the International Liaison becoming a permanent member of the DCP&P staff, and the single point of contact for staff wanting assistance with making a referral for service to ISS-USA or to receive additional assistance with a case with an international dimension. The project also resulted in the drafting and implementation of statewide policy within DCP&P on how to manage international cases. Finally, the project developed an appropriate evaluative tool for determining the effectiveness of the various interventions. The logic model for this project is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Project Logic Model



Because of the unique nature of this project the service model is quite varied depending on the aspect of the project being examined. Importantly, while the intention of the project was to expand the model of service within the state of New Jersey to include routine investigation into every case for possible international family resources, it also resulted in an agency wide change in the ISS-USA case practice model. This unintended consequence of the project has improved case management activities and reduced the number of days it takes ISS-USA to successfully complete a case by over 60%.

Service Delivery DCP&P and ISS-USA:

As mentioned previously DCP&P had a family finding protocol, policy and case practice model in place prior to the Fostering Connections Project's start, and DCP&P also had a contract for services with ISS-USA to provide services on cases with an international dimension. Prior to the start of the demonstration project cases were referred to ISS-USA by any individual case worker, paralegal, supervisor or other member of the DCP&P staff. There were no formal protocols on how a referral was sent, what form was used to make a referral, or which cases would be opened and which would be refused. There was no single point of contact at DCP&P to assist in the referral process, and there was no single point of contact at ISS-USA to receive referrals and verify completeness or accuracy. Finally, some referrals to ISS-USA were faxed, some were e mailed and some were called in by phone.

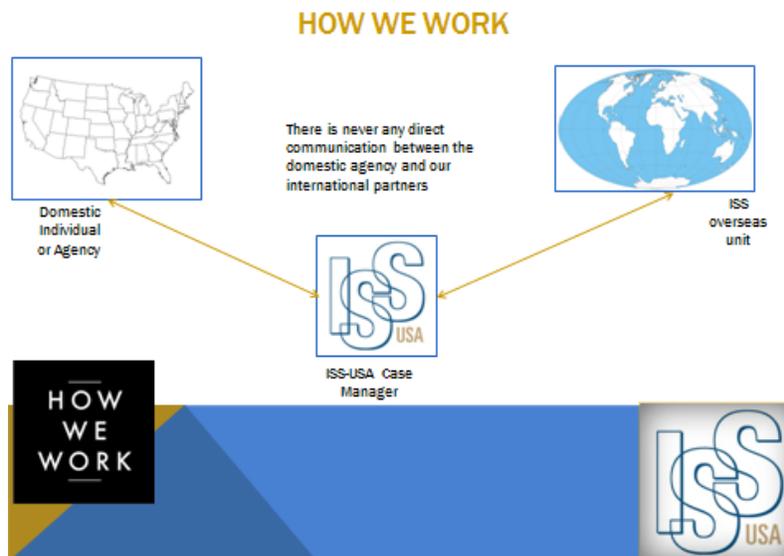
Within DCP&P, despite the growing success of the family finding case practice model, few staff were aware of how or when to explore possible international family connections. Like most other jurisdictions, there was no clear protocol or mandate to undertake family finding in another country, and there was no information on how one might accomplish this if it was determined there were family resources outside the United States. Because of these issues ISS-USA was receiving only about 60-80 referrals for service a year prior to the project's start. The lack of standardization in cases that were referred and accepted meant that cases opened by ISS-USA were not necessarily assisting DCP&P to move the permanency process for a given child forward. The revision of the service model both within DCP&P and at ISS-USA resolved those problems and resulted in an efficient, successful, and timely service model that continues to help more and more children move toward permanency in the state of New Jersey.

Steps to Permanency: The Fusion of Service Models in the Best Interest of the Child

- 1) The DCP&P worker finds out that there is a potential family resource for a child in a foreign country utilizing the family finding protocol in place in New Jersey.
- 2) The DCP&P worker completes the standard ISS-USA referral form that is located on the DCP&P internal web portal.
- 3) The worker forwards the referral form to the DCP&P International Liaison (IL) who verifies that it is complete and ready to be sent to ISS-USA.
- 4) If the referral is incomplete, or there is a high probability that based on the information in the referral that ISS-USA will not be able to complete the service the IL returns the referral to the worker and makes suggestions about how to gather additional information.
- 5) When the referral is complete, the IL forwards the referral to ISS-USA.
- 6) The Intake Coordinator at ISS-USA opens the case and it is assigned to an ISS-USA Intercountry Case Manager.
- 7) The Intercountry Case Manager refers the case to the appropriate ISS branch for service.
- 8) There is continuous communication between the ISS-USA Case Manager and the ISS Federation Case Manager, and the ISS-USA Case Manager and the DCP&P worker assigned to the case.
- 9) The ISS branch in the foreign country completes service and sends the case back to ISS-USA.
- 10) ISS-USA works with the DCP&P worker to complete the case and provide additional services if necessary.¹

Figure 2 provides a visual of how ISS-USA provides intercountry case management services.

Figure 2: Intercountry Case Management Services provided by ISS-USA



¹ All communication about the case takes place between the ISS Intercountry case manager in the U.S. and the foreign country ISS worker, or the ISS Intercountry case manager and the DCP&P worker. No direct communication takes place between the DCP&P worker and the ISS foreign branch.

The ISS Federation relies on qualified and vetted social workers who are native to the country within which they are practicing. It is important to note that ISS does not encourage American social workers to travel overseas to undertake case work as they are unfamiliar with the laws, policies and case practice models in the foreign country. In addition, American social workers are unfamiliar with travel restrictions when accompanying children for placement or visitation and this often leads to problems. If a child is going overseas for visitation or placement, ISS-USA works with DCP&P to ensure that the case worker can travel safely with a child, and that a local social worker is there to meet them when needed. This model of service is very different from what many social workers, lawyers and judges are used to, even those who work regularly with the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) on interjurisdictional placements.

This project's initial aim was to improve the capacity of DCP&P workers to identify and work with children with international connections, and improve ISS-USA's ability to provide comprehensive and timely service on these cases. Changes at both DCP&P and ISS-USA were needed to create a successful delivery service model.

First, while the family finding case practice model, as previously mentioned, was in full force at DCP&P prior to the start of the project, there was no written policy or procedure on how to accomplish family finding when the family was in a foreign country. The first issue was how to better identify children with international family connections. This required that case workers learn to not assume whether a child had family living in a foreign country, but instead to ask **every** child and family member about family resources outside the United States.

The second problem was how to contact and engage those family members in the permanency planning process. The notification of a child in care, and the inclusion of family members outside the United States in permanency planning was a repeated barrier to finalizing a permanency plan. In order to deliver these services to the children in care both ISS-USA and DCP&P had to rethink how best to accomplish the goal of a permanent outcome to protect the child's safety, well-being and permanency.

Changes at DCP&P included the development of the International Liaison position and the implementation of the new statewide policy. At ISS-USA, the agency developed an Intake Coordinator position to ensure the timely receipt and processing of referrals, a new referral form to capture all the information that was necessary to locate family outside of the United States, and an increased number of Memorandum of Understandings with private agencies in countries where the ISS Federation lacked a formal partner.

Finally, there was a notable change in the approach of the project during the three year period. The project moved from being one focused primarily on training to one focused heavily on data collection and analysis. The reasons for this were multi-fold. First, preliminary data from Year One indicated that the training was having little impact on service delivery. There was no marked increase in cases being referred to ISS-USA, and no increase in requests for technical assistance on how to manage cross border cases. Furthermore, the longitudinal survey implied that those who were trained were not retaining the information in any usable manner. Furthermore, the expected “trickle down” of information from the trained workers to the untrained workers never transpired. This required that the evaluation and lead agency staff to try and determine whether: 1) the training was simply ineffective because of the curriculum or the content, 2) additional training was needed, or 3) there needed to be an alternative intervention that would improve case workers’ likelihood of identifying and searching for family outside the U.S. for children on their caseloads. It was determined that an alternative intervention was a good first step to begin identifying what barriers still existed to intentional family finding and engagement.

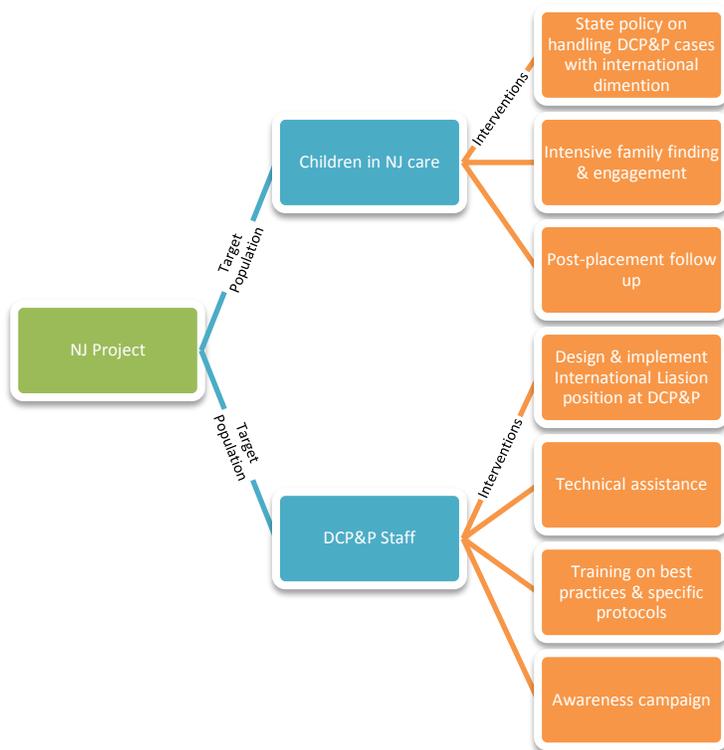
The awareness campaign was the project’s attempt at finding out what is the best way to inform people about a new case practice or service delivery model. A comparison of the information collected from focus groups and data from the first round of the quasi-experimental study was the catalyst for redirecting the effort from the formal one-day training to a different approach, specifically the provision of office presentations by DCP&P’s International Liaison (IL). The evaluation team presented the findings from the longitudinal knowledge retention data that clearly showed that procedures presented in the one-day training were not being retained by those who were trained. An analysis of the focus group

data exhibited that general knowledge was reported as being helpful; however, the frequency with which caseworkers put learned procedures into practice was too low to retain the information on best practices. In addition, focus group participants shared their enthusiasm with having the IL available to offer assistance when working a case that involved an international component. Combining the information from the focus groups, the amount of time and resources to appropriately train DCP&P's workforce, and the frequency with which caseworkers were implementing international family finding procedures, the project team recognized the need to rethink conducting traditional training sessions. Given the collected evidence, replacing traditional training with an awareness campaign focusing on office presentations by the IL was initiated.

Due to the complexity of the project, multiple interventions and activities were undertaken by the project partners over the course of the three years. While the key interventions often had multiple purposes and affected both of the project's target populations, these interventions are discussed here based on the *primary* population targeted: 1) children in the care of the state of New Jersey who have family connections outside of the United States or 2) DCP&P staff. While data collection and evaluation activities are another core element of this project, these activities are discussed separately in the Evaluation Section of this report.

The following figure, Figure 3, illustrates interventions that were part of this project and the primary population it targeted. Each of these interventions is discussed in more detail in the next two sections.

Figure 3: Project Target Populations and Interventions



Activities focused on the target population of children in the care of the state of New Jersey who have family connections outside of the United States

1. Intensive family finding and engagement efforts

ISS-USA supplemented DCP&P’s case practice model around family finding and engagement by providing case management services when a family member was living outside the U.S. ISS-USA provided a range of intercountry case management services including a) tracing, identifying, and notifying potential family resources, b) serving court documents to families abroad, c) assisting family members to engage in family group decision making, d) obtaining home studies to assess families as potential resources, and e) providing resources for family restoration. Additional intercountry services that supported DCP&P’s work through the permanency planning process were also provided by ISS-USA. These services included a) tracing birth, marriage, and death certificates, b) conducting background checks and child abuse registry checks, and c) coordinate logistics for paternity testing.

These family finding and engagement activities began during year one and continued throughout the entire life of the project. While the ISS-USA Case Manager, DCP&P case worker, and ISS Federation partners were those directly involved in this set of interventions, the work being done was to benefit the child involved with DCP&P's care. ISS-USA case managers worked closely with the child's DCP&P case work staff, and ISS Federation partners to successfully complete these services. ISS-USA case managers followed established ISS Federation protocols and procedures including regular communication between the DCP&P worker and the ISS-USA Case Manager, sharing of documents and/or reports, following best case practice for cross-border social work, and tracking outcomes. In addition, throughout the course of the project, ISS-USA worked in conjunction with the project staff representing DCP&P to develop a standard protocol for referring, managing, and closing cases. Based on best practices from ISS-USA's extensive experience providing intercountry case work, this standard protocol included creating new forms (e.g. referral form, can't open letter), data collection instruments (e.g., case closing form), and procedures for working with the newly created position of International Liaison at DCP&P. These protocols and procedures were vetted at each agency and were aligned with both the requirements of the ISS Federation for case practice as well as DCP&P policy and procedures for quality case practice.

2. Post-placement follow-up if a child was placed by DCP&P with family outside the U.S.

If a child in DCP&P's care was ultimately placed with a family member outside the U.S. (or had been placed prior to a referral to ISS-USA), ISS-USA arranged and provided post-placement follow up services as requested. These services were designed to assess the safety of the placement and the well-being of the child per DCP&P's requirements. While specifics of the services varied based on the needs of the child and the country involved, this type of service often included arranging visitation and monitoring by a local social worker, writing post-placement follow up reports for the court or for DCP&P, and assisting with ensuring the safety of the child if the placement was not successful. In the event that a placement disrupted, or was determined to not be in the child's best interest, ISS-USA provided technical assistance on the options for DCP&P. There was only one case over the life of the project that required that a child be returned from a placement in a foreign country.

These post placement activities began during year one of the project and continued throughout the entire life of the project. The ISS-USA Case Manager, DCP&P case worker, and ISS Federation partners worked cooperatively to ensure the best outcomes for the child. The same protocols and procedures were used for post placement follow up as was used for family finding and engagement activities.

3. State policy on handling DCP&P cases with international dimensions

DCP&P and ISS-USA agreed before the start of the project that new policy would be written on how to handle DCP&P cases with an international dimension to ensure the consistent implementation of best practices and to codify the progress of this project. Existing policy related to working with ISS-USA was out of date and only focused on a small set of intercountry services, primarily international adoption. In addition, the older policy did not provide specific guidelines for policy implementation.

State policy revisions started in year two of the project once the protocols and procedures for handling cases between DCP&P and ISS-USA had been formalized. The Division of Children and Family (DCF) Commissioner was very supportive of updating the policy and facilitated introductions between ISS-USA project staff and the head of DCF's policy department. From there, DCF took the lead on creating the policy and getting it implemented. They created a committee to write the policy which included DCF policy staff, the International Liaison, and the Program Manager and Principal Investigator from ISS-USA. The policy included: a) the purpose and connection to the Fostering Connections to Success legislation, b) the types of assistance ISS-USA can provide, c) how to refer, manage, and close a case with ISS-USA, d) the role and responsibilities of the International Liaison, and e) procedure for translation and interpretation practices. (See Appendix B for a copy of the complete policy).

The drafting of the policy took several months and was completed in year three. Due to extensive internal review and procedures for new policy implementation, New Jersey did not formally enact the policy until a few months after the end of the three year project.

Activities focused on the target population of DCP&P staff:

1. Design and Implement the position of International Liaison at DCP&P

A key part of this project was to create a new position at DCP&P that would act as the liaison between the division and ISS-USA. This position, the International Liaison, would become an internal expert on working with ISS-USA and act as the single point of contact for all DCP&P staff on these issues. The main responsibilities of the IL were to: 1) receive and review all intercountry referral materials from DCP&P workers, 2) screen and refer cases to ISS-USA, 3) relay any questions or requests for technical assistance to ISS-USA, 4) assist in the development of policy, protocols and procedures related to the project, 5) collect data related to her activities, and 6) consult with DCP&P local offices on case practice issues pertaining to families that require intercountry services.

The International Liaison (IL) position was designed and advertised in year one. Because of the need for the person to have extensive knowledge of child welfare in New Jersey and the protocols and case practice of DCP&P, it was determined that the ideal candidate would be someone already on staff within DCP&P. Therefore, the International Liaison position would be internal to DCP&P but funded through the project. Due to the lengthy hiring process of DCP&P, the person for the position was hired towards the end of year one and was trained at the beginning of year two. The position of the IL remained throughout the three years, though her role changed slightly through the course of the project. These changes will be discussed later in this section.

2. Training for DCP&P staff on best practice and specific protocols when a case had an international dimension

Trainings were provided to two groups of stakeholders within DCP&P: child welfare staff (including paralegals) and legal and judicial professionals who work with DCP&P during permanency planning and determinations (DAGs, CASA, etc.). Seven trainings (plus a pilot training) were provided to child welfare staff during the first and second year of the project. In addition, a single training was developed during the second year for the legal and judicial professionals to complement training already provided to DCP&P workers. This legal training was created as a pilot training to learn how best to assist legal and judicial professionals in these areas. The trainings for DCP&P social work staff were each a full day while the training for the legal professionals was a half-day training.

Both trainings emphasized one key message: that every child in DCP&P's care potentially has family outside the U.S. and that to ensure the best interest of the child, these family members should be included fully in the permanency planning process. See Appendix C for more information about the purpose and content of the trainings.

The content for the social work training included:

- The importance of and how to identify children and families with potential family resources outside of the U.S.
- The types of services available from ISS-USA related to intercountry case management
- How to refer, manage and close a case with ISS-USA
- The role of the International Liaison and how she can support DCP&P workers

The content for the legal training included:

- Protocols for identifying children with potential family connections overseas
- Domestic and international laws on best practices in child welfare
- Available resources for searching for and evaluating family outside of the United States
- Including family from outside the United States in permanency planning and decision making
- Working with international legal and social service partners in the best interest of children

3. Awareness campaign at DCP&P local offices:

Based on the evaluation data collected from the trainings and focus groups, a state-wide awareness campaign was added as another key intervention during year two of the project. The awareness campaign was designed to increase the awareness of 1) the position of the International Liaison as a resource to DCP&P staff, 2) best practices when handling a case with an international dimension, and 3) resources available to workers when a case has an international dimension.

The awareness campaign had two components. The first component was a poster that acted as a visual reminder about the importance of asking about international connections for children in DCP&P's care. (A copy of the poster can be found in Appendix D). The poster also included a list of intercountry case management services that are available from ISS-USA and contact information for the International Liaison. This poster was provided to each local DCP&P office (N=42) and smaller versions and

electronic copies were made available to all staff. The second component of the campaign was a visit by the International Liaison to each DCP&P local office. She typically visited during regularly scheduled monthly staff meetings where she was able to make a formal presentation and answered questions. The IL also provided a resource binder(s) with additional information and resources to each office's Resource Specialist. (see Appendix E for the content of the resource binder). While the IL attempted to visit each office, scheduling conflicts and unforeseen circumstances made it impossible to visit every site. In total, over the course of the 13 month campaign (June 2011-July 2012), she was able to visit 39 of the 42 local offices.

4. Technical Assistance on how to handle DCP&P cases with an international dimension

During the implementation of the project activities and services over the first year, DCP&P workers were requesting assistance from ISS-USA on issues that were not requests for a specific type of intercountry case management service. These questions often revolved around issues of immigration, legal procedures or international conventions or policies. Therefore, ISS-USA project staff began to provide technical assistance on these requests. Technical assistance provided by ISS-USA was defined as answering a substantive question related to international child welfare and/or child protection that does not involve a service that ISS-USA can provide by opening a case.

In addition to this individualized technical assistance, DCP&P staff were given access to the interactive FAQ website that ISS-USA and Rutgers had developed as a follow up to the trainings provided to a smaller group of DCP&P staff (www.iss-usa.org/trainingfaq). The website included common questions asked to ISS-USA about international child welfare and protection and handling cases with ISS-USA. In addition, questions asked during trainings or through technical assistance were also added to the website.

IV. Collaboration

This project was conducted by International Social Service – United States of America Branch, Inc. (ISS-USA) in collaboration with the Department of Children and Family of the State of New Jersey (DCF) and Rutgers University's Institute for Families (IFF). In addition to direct involvement in all

project activities and decisions, ISS-USA handled the project management as the lead organization. DCF, and specifically DCP&P (formerly DYFS at the start of the project), was responsible for hiring and overseeing the International Liaison, working with ISS-USA to establish protocols and procedures around referring, managing, and closing cases with ISS-USA, enabling data collection from DCP&P staff, and collaborating to re-write policy. IFF was initially responsible for the training as well as the evaluation of the project. Over the course of the first 8-10 months of the project, the curriculum development was transferred to ISS-USA though IFF conducted the social work trainings. ISS-USA both developed, and conducted, the legal training. All three partners were active participants in regular team meetings, discussions on program interventions and evaluation activities, and decisions about changes during the course of the project.

The table below, Table 1, illustrates the involvement of the three partner organizations related to specific key interventions and activities of the project.

Table 1: Project Activities with partner Involvement

| Project Activity | Primary Actors (Design, Implement, etc.) | Secondary Actors (provide feedback, assist with implementation, etc.) |
|---|---|--|
| Referrals for Intercountry Services (family-finding, engagement, post-placement, etc.) | DCP&P and ISS-USA | NA |
| Providing Intercountry Services (family-finding, engagement, post-placement, etc.) | ISS-USA | DCP&P |
| Training of DCP&P Staff | Development – ISS-USA Delivery - IFF | Development – IFF, DCP&P Delivery – ISS-USA, DCP&P |
| Training of legal/judicial staff | Development – ISS-USA Delivery – ISS-USA | Development –DCP&P Delivery – DCP&P |
| Awareness Campaign | ISS-USA, DCP&P | IFF |
| State-wide Policy | DCP&P, ISS-USA | NA |
| Technical Assistance | ISS-USA | NA |
| Evaluation Services | IFF | ISS-USA, DCP&P |

Some of the partnership relationships existed prior to the Family Connection grant while others were built as a result of the grant. ISS-USA and DCP&P had an existing relationship. ISS-USA and Rutgers University Institute for Families were just beginning to work together when the grant announcement presented an ideal opportunity to work more closely. Rutgers University and the IFF, in particular, were working closely with DCP&P as the training provider for court mandated training for DCP&P staff. While the nature of the work that IFF provided as part of this project changed (i.e., became more evaluation focused and the majority of the curricular development for the trainings was taken over by ISS-USA), the relationship itself did not dissolve. However, due to the changes in what IFF was doing through the life of the project, as well as internal changes within IFF, by the middle of the second year of the project, the School of Social Work became the project partner instead of IFF.

ISS-USA brought a number of long-standing professional collaborations to assist on specific intercountry cases handled during the project. These included the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Health and Human Services – Office of Refugee Resettlement, AdoptUSKids, the ISS Federation (both the General Secretary and its units in over 120 countries), National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, American Bar Association – Center for Children and the Law, University of Maryland School of Social Work, University of Maryland Law School, and USCIS. ISS-USA also fostered new relationships with organizations and agencies to further support the work of the project. These included Administrators of Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children, USCIS, International Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and The Seneca Center.

Through the life of the project, the three partners developed a strong, collaborative working relationship that allowed for changes and enhancements to the original project design ultimately leading to a very successful project. An intentional effort was made to create opportunities to foster strong relationships among the partners since the partners were spread out both within New Jersey and outside of it (ISS-USA is located in Baltimore, MD), and because while the agencies had some previous professional cooperation, the specific project staff had not worked together prior to this project. In person meetings were scheduled regularly, about every 6-8 weeks or so, for the first two years of the projects.

These meetings took place at one of the partners' offices and lasted an entire day. All project staff was asked to attend and at least one staff member from ISS-USA, DCP&P, and IFF was required to attend each meeting. These meetings were used to share updates on project and evaluation activities, discuss obstacles related to implementation, plan upcoming project activities, and to make key project and evaluation decisions. In addition, these meetings included time for project members to build relationships through informal conversation and over lunch. Face to face team meetings continued to be held during the third year but less frequently due to the project activities and the fact that project staff had already established relationship and found phone and email communication to be sufficient for many matters.

Other techniques were also used to improve collaboration among the project partners related to the design and implementation of the project and its evaluation. Quarterly calls were scheduled between ISS-USA and DCP&P to address case questions and share data. ISS-USA and the evaluation team also had regular calls and meetings specific to the needs of the evaluation. Additional conference calls or face to face meetings were scheduled with all three partners on an as needed basis when a major concern or time-sensitive issue arose. The annual Grantees meetings were seen as an opportunity for project partners to strengthen their relationships with a representative from each project partner attending each year. In addition to the dialogue as part of these meetings, project staff made time for team lunches and dinners which were used for both project-related and non-work conversations. This time together led to key brainstorming and project decisions. This also served as a time for staff to become acquainted with project partners on an individual level. In addition, project staff took advantage of additional opportunities for meeting and collaboration such as participating in the Center for Community Leadership, Community Leadership Institute offered to Grantees by U.S. Health and Human Services during year 2 of the project (February 7- 9, 2011). Finally, the Principal Investigator often facilitated an open environment which emphasized each person's opinions and expertise. These activities contributed to a friendly and solution-based environment for all team interactions.

Internal knowledge sharing and training was also important for effective collaboration and implementation of project activities. At the start of the project, all team members learned about the project

goals, activities, and the evaluation component. This included providing in-depth knowledge about each of the three partner agencies and the specific work related to this project, reading the project proposal, and engaging in initial discussions of implementation and project design. As the project progressed, and the ISS-USA staff became more familiar with DCP&P case practice, DCP&P hosted a day-long training for ISS-USA on all aspects of the agency including the specifics of how a case moves to permanency and the relationship between various arms of DCP&P.

There was some staff turnover in the course of the project. To ensure smooth transitions, each new staff person regardless of partner agency (i.e., ISS-USA, DCP&P, or IFF) spent time with the Principal Investigator and Program Manager on-site at ISS-USA to learn about all aspects of the project and their role and responsibilities. All project protocols and procedures were agreed to by all parties, written down, and shared with all team members. There was also an understanding and agreement that due to each partner's area of expertise, while all opinions and ideas were equally valued, sometimes it was best to defer to a specific agency if a decision was within their realm of expertise. Finally, the inclusion of the evaluation team in all project implementation discussions and decisions was critical to the success of the project.

Collaboration was also important to the sustainability of this project. First, the relationships and trust built between project members throughout the course of the project helped DCP&P better understand the value of the work of the project and the benefit to both its case workers and the children they served by the end of the three years. Similarly, the relationship built between the evaluation team and ISS-USA led to both parties seeing the mutual benefit of continuing to work together around evaluation of this type of work. Second, based on the strong relationship cultivated with key leadership at both the DCP&P level and DCF level, there was key support to continue the position of International Liaison and to continue to fund the intercountry case services. Through these efforts, the project's staff showed a proven ability to overcome obstacles and work collaboratively across disciplines and industries to move forward with finding and establishing family connections for an increasingly large number of children in the New Jersey Foster Care System.

Beyond the obvious importance of clear communication, several lessons were learned through this project related to collaboration across partners:

1. *Ensure clear understanding of how each partner works on child welfare cases:* Initially, there were many gaps of knowledge around the specifics of how child welfare cases are handled in New Jersey and intercountry case practice as done by ISS-USA and the ISS Federation. Once each team took a day to fully educate the other on all specifics, a lot of time was saved and case work was handled much more efficiently. For instance, knowing the specifics of how a child moves through the permanency planning process in New Jersey, led ISS-USA Case Managers to provide better support as well as additional beneficial services to help obtain an ultimate permanency decision made for the child.
2. *Set clear standards and expectations:* Working with three different bureaucracies with three different sets of expectations and standards of quality can be difficult. Therefore, setting specific expectations, standards, and roles for this project was important for accountability and successful program implementation. This framework was also helpful when there was staff turnover.
3. *The evaluation team is a critical part of the project team:* The inclusion of the evaluation team allowed a) the evaluation team to intimately understand the project so to best evaluate it and b) the project team to be mindful of how project decisions could affect, or even hinder, the evaluation.
4. *Support from key leadership at the public child welfare agency enabled changes to happen quickly:* Keeping the Commissioner of DCF informed about the project, future activities, and any major obstacles to moving forward resulted in both greater supports for the project within DCP&P as well as assistance to implement specific components that helped to improve the success of the project, such as implementing state-wide policy.

V) Sustainability

As mentioned previously, ISS-USA had a contract for service with the state of New Jersey to provide international case management services on an as needed basis prior to the start of this demonstration project. Since the end of the project, New Jersey has continued the contract and increased the number of cases that are referred to ISS-USA. Second, the service model put in place during the project has been bolstered by a written policy that requires DCP&P to work directly with ISS-USA on all cases that require international service. Third, ISS-USA and DCP&P are exploring the possibility of a second Awareness Campaign to increase the number of children identified as needing international family finding and engagement. It is believed that the increase in referrals after the first Awareness Campaign can again be improved upon by a second Awareness Campaign. Fourth, New Jersey has established the position of International Liaison as a permanent part of the DCP&P staff within their Interstate Unit. The IL continues to be the first point of contact for all DCP&P workers who either have questions about a

case or who wish to refer a case to ISS-USA. Fifth, DCP&P have posted the ISS-USA referral form and instructions on the agency's Intranet to ensure that every case worker and supervisor has access to the proper forms. Finally, DCP&P and ISS-USA are working together to continue to track the outcome of every case referred to ISS-USA. ISS-USA tracks all outcomes and shares the information with DCP&P.

The sustainability of this project does not rest solely on the interventions and commitments of DCP&P to international family finding and engagement. There are numerous other stakeholders in the state who play a key role in the permanency planning process that must be engaged and informed in the international family finding and engagement process. With this in mind ISS-USA applied for, and received, a grant through the Children in Court Program in New Jersey to train all judicial, legal and advocacy partners in permanency planning. In addition, the grant funds technical assistance to these groups for a period of 14 months. To date ISS-USA has trained nearly 300 lawyers, parent representatives, judges, GALs, Deputies Attorney General and probation officers and provided over 80 hours of technical assistance to these legal and judicial stakeholders.

ISS-USA and Rutgers University School of Social Work (SSW) continue to work collaboratively on a number of projects. Rutgers University SSW has partnered with ISS-ISA on the aforementioned Children in Court Program to provide evaluation services to gauge the level of knowledge of these stakeholders about international family finding and engagement and to evaluate the trainings themselves. Rutgers University also continues to develop and provide training for DCP&P on a broad range of issues related to best models in case practice. Finally, ISS-USA and Rutgers University School of Social Work are seeking funding to replicate the success of this project in other jurisdictions, and have collaborated on a number of presentations and forthcoming articles.

ISS-USA made several key changes to their case practice and service delivery model as a result of the project that have been instrumental in improving services for all states that refer cases to ISS-USA. First, ISS-USA created a new referral form that is far more comprehensive than previous versions. This form allows the Intake Coordinator to quickly ascertain whether there is sufficient information to open a case. (A copy of the referral form is included in Appendix F). In the past all cases were opened regardless of

the ability of ISS-USA to actual complete the service. Cases, particularly family tracings, stayed open for years despite the fact that based on the limited information provided the likelihood of ISS-USA ever being able to find the family was virtually non-existent. Now when a referral is received that lacks necessary depth of information the case is not opened and the referring agency receives a formal “Cannot Open Letter” that documents due diligence (See Appendix G).

VI) Evaluation

Evaluation activities for this project included both process and outcome components and sought to determine the extent to which the project accomplished its objectives. The process evaluation assessed the implementation of the project, as well as linkages between system partners, to ensure that the identified training needs are met. The outcome evaluation used rigorous methods to examine how the project’s interventions and activities affected key outcomes of interest related to the two populations involved in this project, DCP&P staff and children and families involved in DCP&P cases.

The evaluation activity of the three-year project incorporated many different data collection strategies. The strategies included a needs assessment, focus groups, training satisfaction survey, quasi-experimental longitudinal study, longitudinal ISS activity recording, and a final statewide survey. Evaluations of the data collected from each of these strategies and an explanation of how the data were used to guide the three-year project are presented for review.

Process Evaluation Design and Research Questions

A mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to examine process issues related to the project’s implementation. Evaluation staff met regularly with the project team to document implementation efforts and necessary changes in evaluation plans to respond to unexpected evaluation challenges. Qualitative methods, including focus groups and key informant interviews, were used to understand participants’ experiences of services and to document accomplishments and challenges from the perspective of program participants. Quantitative data were used to document program outputs, such

as the number of trainings held and the number of professionals trained. Process evaluation activities focused on obtaining and reporting information regarding grant outputs (i.e., number of trainings held, number of workers trained, profile of workers trained), examining issues related to the quality of instruction and instructors, and identifying perceived future training needs. Efforts were also conducted to identify obstacles that prohibit effective application of training skills in child welfare practice in New Jersey.

The key research questions for the process evaluation of this project were:

- 1) What information and content will best assist caseworkers in their work with child welfare cases?
- 2) Do untrained caseworkers benefit from having others trained in best practices for working child welfare cases that reach outside of the U.S.?
- 3) Does training caseworkers and other child welfare personnel on best practices in international family finding and family connections increase the effectiveness of caseworkers in New Jersey?
- 4) Does increased awareness of available resources with international cases decrease the number of active child welfare cases?

An experimental design was utilized to examine the proximal, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the training. The design matched 12 New Jersey vicinages on a variety of demographic, geographic and child welfare variables into 6 pairs. One county from each pair was randomly assigned to the experimental condition (receiving training intervention) while the other was assigned to a control condition (not receiving training). This hybrid of randomized assignment and matching at the vicinage level was selected for several reasons. First, randomly assigning individuals who work in the same child welfare office to experimental and control would not allow us to address the likelihood of diffusion of the intervention from experimental group members to control group members. Such diffusion would likely contaminate results by corrupting the control group and impact evaluation findings. Second, random assignment vicinage (which typically covers one or more counties) enabled us to identify a very specific population of child welfare workers and legal/judicial staff for participation in training and look at the overall effects of this training on children and families served by the vicinage.

For this evaluation, proximal outcomes were defined as changes in knowledge that occur in training participants as assessed by surveys given three times following the completion of training over a two-year period. In addition, changes on working conditions and individual beliefs were measured by two surveys, an initial survey sent to DCP&P personnel in New Jersey that involved a Needs Assessment evaluation conducted at the start of this three-year project and a final assessment survey sent to the same DCP&P personnel at the end of this project.

Outcome Evaluation Design and Research Questions

The outcome evaluation sought to measure the project's results and the changes that occurred as a result of the project's interventions and activities. Evaluation of child welfare training programs has typically focused on identifying whether learning has occurred and, if so, what has been learned (Collins, Amodeo & Clay, 2007). Few training evaluations examine the degree to which trainees apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in training to their job or how the application of training influences client outcomes (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Through an outcome evaluation, this project hoped to examine both types of outcomes. Similar to the design of the Process Evaluation, a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to address the primary Outcome Evaluation questions. Most of the analysis was completed by comparing responses from an initial Need Assessment survey conducted in 2010 to an end-of-project survey that invited all DCP&P personnel in the state of New Jersey to participate.

The key research questions for the outcome evaluation of this project were:

- 1) What were the proximal changes in knowledge and skills of trainees?
- 2) What measurable changes occurred in worker performance following training, as reported through self-assessments?
- 3) What changes occurred in permanency outcomes for children and families served by DCF based on the work of this project?

Evaluation Participants

For the Process and Outcome Evaluations, the participants were anyone involved in working child welfare cases in New Jersey. This included social workers, supervisors, DCP&P management and staff, lawyers, legal staff, etc. Table 2 provides the number of each type of participant involved in the evaluation of this project. Since our project focused on improving the lives of children in New Jersey by improving the workforce involved in child welfare, the inclusiveness of participants was necessary and important.

Table 2: Evaluation Participants

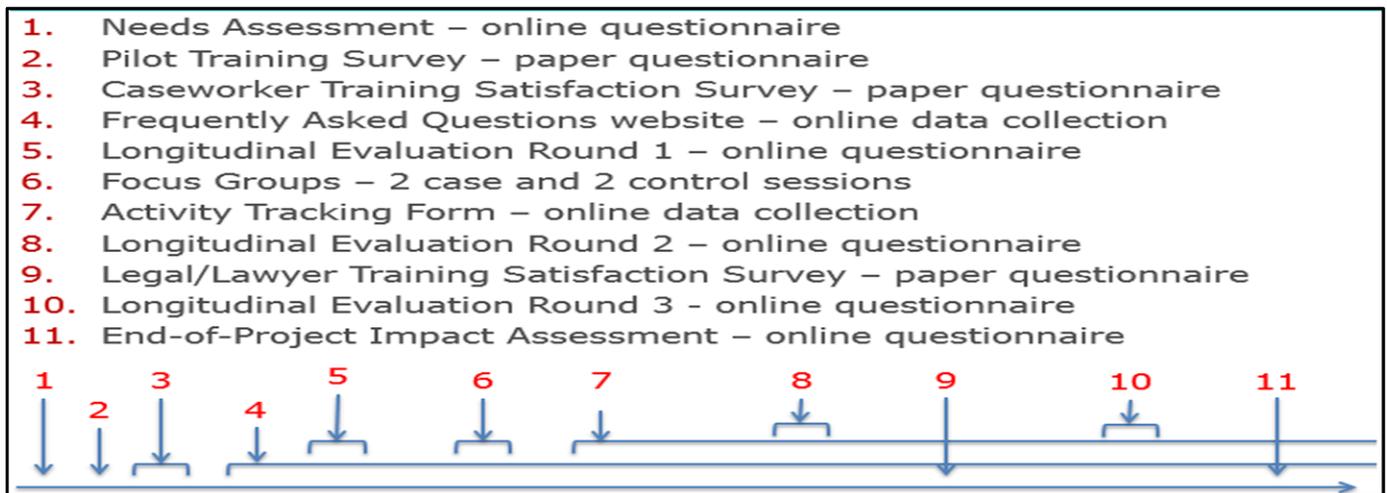
| | Needs Assessment | Training Pilot | Quasi-experimental Study | Focus Groups | Online FAQ Website | Legal Training | Final NJ Survey |
|--|------------------|----------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| September 30, 2009 to September 29, 2010 (1 year) | 1400 | 24 | | | | | |
| September 30, 2010 to March 31, 2011 | | | 600 | | | | |
| April 1, 2011 to September 29, 2011 | | | <i>Round 2</i> | 35 | 200 | | |
| September 30, 2011 to March 31, 2012 | | | <i>Round 3</i> | | 200 | 30 | |
| April 1, 2012 to September 29, 2012 | | | | | 200 | | 1965 |
| Total | 1400 | 24 | 600 | 35 | 600 | 30 | 1965 |

Data Collection Procedures

Due to the complexity of implementing process and outcome evaluations for two different target populations (DCP&P staff and children and families with potential family connections outside the U.S.), the evaluation became a complex undertaking and a core component of the project (see the section on changes in the evaluation plan for more information). To answer the project's research questions, multiple

data sources and approaches were utilized over the course of the project. Figure 4 provides an overview of all the data collection tools and when they were used during the course of the project. Each of these tools will be described in more detail within the results section of this report.

Figure 4: Evaluation Timeline



The data collection activities were as comprehensive as the demographics of the participants. The evaluation team collected all the data represented in the timeline above except for the case activity numbers recorded by ISS. All data collection methods were reviewed and approved by Rutgers IRB (Protocol #: 11-033M), and did not include any incentives to potential respondents for any of the collection efforts.

Major Evaluation Plan Changes

When the project team identified that training alone was not going to provide a large enough impact on caseworker knowledge and beliefs, the team recognized the need to reach beyond a basic train and evaluate project model. The team adjusted the training effort to a more dissemination of information model that incorporated a wider and more frequent contact with DCP&P personnel. This adjustment required closer monitoring of changes in the workforce, which was accomplished by increasing evaluation activity.

Training for Project Staff Related to Evaluation

As the evaluation was a critical part of the project from the start, all project members were made aware of the evaluation objectives and plan during the initial project meetings. In addition, as new staff became part of the project, they were provided training on both the intent of the evaluation and its progress. Due to the collaboration between evaluation and project staff on all aspects of the project, there was no need for any specific training related to the evaluation specifically. The only exception to this was for the case records kept at ISS-USA. For cases that were part of this project, ISS-USA Case Managers were provided instruction on how to record data about each case into a specific excel file used to capture case service data and outcomes data related to the case and child(ren) involved. In addition, the Project Manager was available to all project staff throughout the project to answer questions related to data collection and the larger evaluation component. Project staff also dated on all aspects of the evaluation during regular project team meetings. At each meeting, the evaluation team would present current activities and findings to date, discuss their next steps, and ask for any clarification or assistance as needed. As appropriate, project staff also provided feedback and suggestions related to the implementation of the evaluation activities and provided insight when evaluation findings were shared.

Several methods were found to be successful in engaging project staff with the evaluation of the project. The first was making sure that each staff person understood the scope of the evaluation component, its importance to this project, and his or her role in it - even if it was only peripheral. As part of this, it was important that project staff understood that they themselves were not being assessed, but rather the project activities in which they participated. The second was having the project implementation team and the evaluation teams interact regularly so they could the intersections of their work as well as to help “demystify” the evaluation. The third factor that heightened the engagement of project staff with the evaluation was the ability of the lead evaluator to make every aspect of the evaluation understandable and accessible to individuals with no experience with data.

Process and Outcome Evaluation Results

Needs Assessment: At the beginning of the project, an online survey was distributed to all DCP&P employees whether they were directly or indirectly involved in child welfare. The primary motivations for the survey were to collect information on beliefs, practices, and experienced barriers when conducting child welfare and how it relates to international family connections, and to use this information to help identify important content for future training. 1400 people responded to the anonymous survey. 17.1% of respondents identified themselves as a Supervisor, 9.7% reported being Casework Supervisors, 8.3% were Case Practice Specialists, 7% were Litigation Specialists/Paralegals, 4% were Resource Development Specialists, 2.6% reported being Managers, 1.4% were Litigation Supervisors, and 49% of the respondents selected “other” when asked to provide their work title. The most frequent reported title when respondent selected “other” was Caseworker.

When asked to identify or describe their race, 42.5% of respondents indicated that they were White, not Hispanic, 26.6% reported that they were Black, not Hispanic, while 18.8% of those who responded indicated that they were White, Hispanic. A small percentage (7.0%) of respondents reported that they identify as more than one race. The respondents’ ages include: 34.9% reported that they are between 25-34 years of age, 26.6% of respondents are between 35-44 years old, and 21.6% indicated that they were between 45 and 54 years of age. Regarding the percentage of respondents who held educational degrees, 48 % of respondents held a bachelor’s degree. Approximately 17% of respondents had completed some graduate level work, and 23% of employees who responded held a Master’s degree.

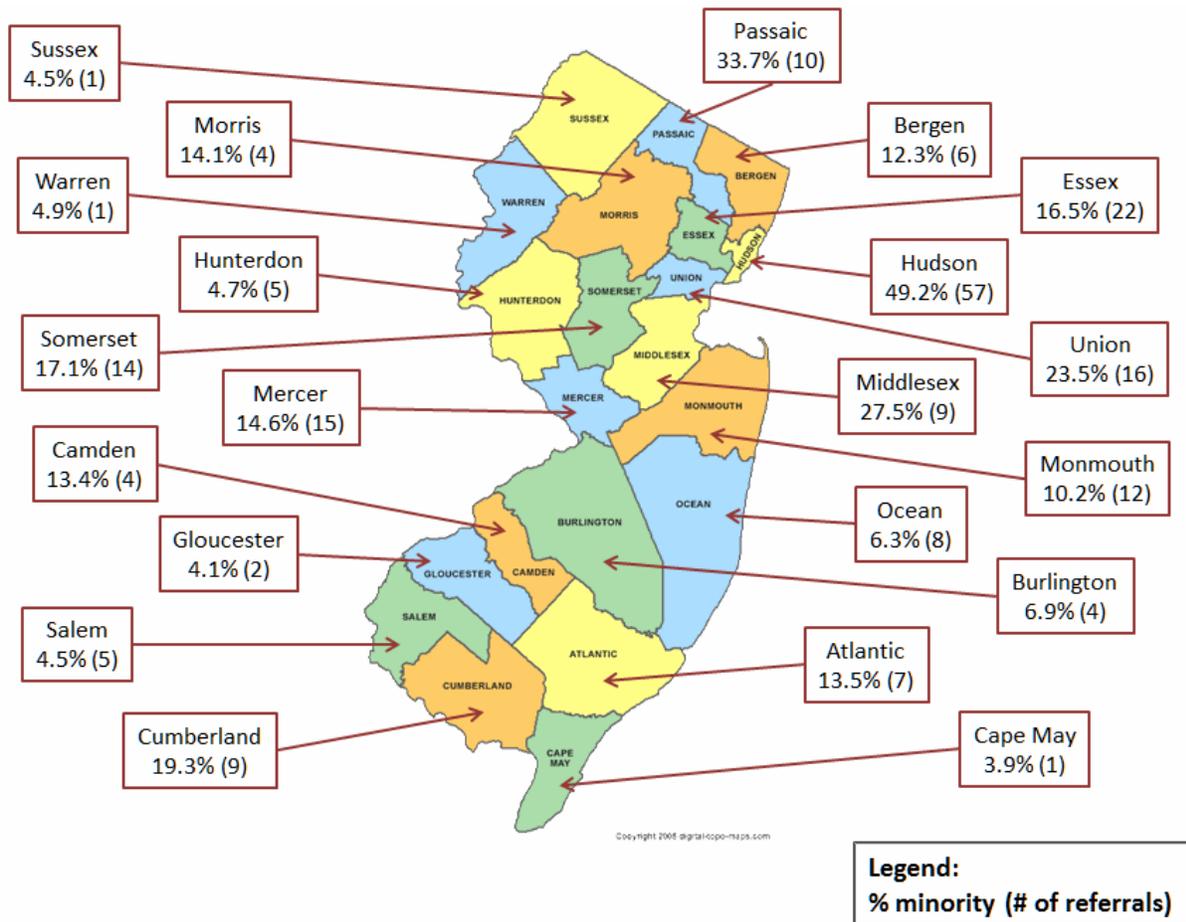
Information captured related to the level of self-reported expertise in the area of international child welfare was a primary component of the Needs Assessment (see Table 3).

Table 3: Office Environment and Self Evaluation

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| My office frequently assists with cases outside of New Jersey but within the USA | 6.3% | 12.8% | 7.4% | 22.7% | 38.6% | 12.2% |
| My office frequently assists with cases outside the USA. | 24.2% | 31.6% | 13.8% | 18.8% | 8.7% | 2.9% |
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of NJ but within the USA. | 9.2% | 17.1% | 13.1% | 18.6% | 29.8% | 12.2% |
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of the USA. | 33.1% | 29.3% | 13.2% | 11.3% | 9.3% | 3.9% |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of NJ but within the USA. | 7.7% | 10.8% | 10.0% | 20.7% | 37.9% | 12.9% |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of the USA. | 28.8% | 29.8% | 14.4% | 12.0% | 11.1% | 3.9% |

The collected information showed that many workers were not aware of supporting resources and were not confident in their ability to facilitate cases outside of the USA. In addition, a majority of the respondents reported that their office did not frequently assist with cases that reached outside of the USA. Figure 4 shows the number of international case referrals captured by ISS-USA in 2007/2008 and the estimated minority percentage by county in New Jersey. Given the minority percentage and the number of referrals over a two-year period, an assumption can be made that potential international child welfare cases are not being referred to ISS-USA for assistance.

Figure 4: Case Referrals to ISS-USA and Minority Percentage by County (2007/2008)



The information from the Needs Assessment substantiated the need for future training, and highlighted an available opportunity to decrease the number of children in foster care (i.e. increase international family connections) by training the workforce on available resources and best practices.

Training Satisfaction Survey: One pilot training and six one-day training sessions were conducted to increase the knowledge and understanding of child welfare and international family connections best practices, and bring additional awareness of the services provided by ISS-USA to help facilitate international child welfare activities within DCP&P.

Table 4 presents quantitative data collected that identify the positive experience people received by participating in the training. Among the qualitative data collected, the most positive occurring issue was the knowledge level of the training personnel and the most negative occurring issue was that the class was too long.

Table 4: Training Satisfaction (N=115)

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| My knowledge of the topics covered in today's training has improved. | 0.9% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 3.5% | 45.2% | 50.4% |
| I had previous knowledge of this topic prior to attending the training today. | 20.0% | 23.5% | 6.1% | 23.5% | 23.5% | 3.5% |
| Having participated in the training today increased my awareness of international placement. | 2.6% | 0.9% | 0.9% | 4.3% | 40.0% | 51.3% |
| The training today has increased my understanding of what ISS does. | 2.6% | 0.9% | 0.0% | 1.7% | 36.5% | 58.3% |
| Having participated in the training increased the likelihood that I will refer cases to ISS. | 2.6% | 0.9% | 0.0% | 7.0% | 36.8% | 52.5% |
| I believe I would benefit from receiving additional information on the topics discussed in today's training. | 4.3% | 3.5% | 2.6% | 13.9% | 41.7% | 33.9% |

Although satisfaction levels were high, a great deal of time and resources were allocated to train this small portion of the workforce. Due to the required time and resources, the project members wanted to verify that knowledge from training would not be lost over time, and that providing training would increase case referrals throughout the state (i.e. translating into more children leaving or staying out of foster care due to increased international family connections). To verify the effectiveness of the training, focus groups and a quasi-experimental study that followed trained and untrained DCP&P personnel was initiated.

Quasi-experimental Study: A quasi-experimental study was implemented to evaluate the level of knowledge gained by people attending one-day training on available resources and child welfare best practices. The DCP&P job types represented in the training include Resource Development Specialists,

Case Practice Specialists, Litigation Specialists/Paralegals, Litigation Supervisors, Supervisors, Assistant Area Directors, Directors, and Managers. The 124 individuals who received training were identified as the case group for the study, and the control group encompassed 400 people who were not trained but worked in similar areas throughout the state. These two groups were further broken down into subgroups called cohorts, which represented six different areas (i.e. paired counties with similar minority demographics) in New Jersey. Participants were invited to complete three online surveys over the course of two years. The first survey was distributed three months following the completion of the six training sessions (i.e. March 2011), the second survey was distributed seven months later (i.e. October 2011), and the third in May 2012.

The surveys contained nine subject-area questions to evaluate knowledge that participants may have gained as a result of having attended the training, as well as the level of knowledge among respondents who were untrained. Table 5 shows the descriptive analysis of the nine questions from the three surveys presented in three formats (Overall Scores, Average Cohort Scores, and Average Trained/Not Trained Scores). Overall scores shows the ratio of the number correct over the total responded for each of the nine questions and the overall number correct for each of the three surveys (i.e. 3 rounds of data collection). Average Cohort Scores shows the average number correct for each survey by cohort, and the Average Trained/Not Trained Scores shows average scores for those trained/not trained by survey.

Table 5: Knowledge Transfer Questions

| Overall Scores | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Round | Average | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 | Q8 | Q9 |
| 1 | 5.64 | 0.882 | 0.621 | 0.669 | 0.485 | 0.538 | 0.805 | 0.396 | 0.645 | 0.598 |
| 2 | 5.43 | 0.891 | 0.580 | 0.667 | 0.587 | 0.522 | 0.746 | 0.384 | 0.558 | 0.493 |
| 3 | 5.70 | 0.919 | 0.588 | 0.730 | 0.547 | 0.520 | 0.730 | 0.446 | 0.682 | 0.534 |

| Average Cohort Scores | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Cohort | | | | | |
| | Cohort | Cohort | Cohort | Cohort | Cohort | Cohort |
| Round | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | 5.90 | 5.04 | 5.86 | 5.90 | 5.24 | 5.88 |
| 2 | 5.05 | 6.07 | 5.44 | 5.95 | 5.50 | 4.85 |
| 3 | 5.35 | 5.88 | 5.69 | 6.05 | 5.46 | 5.79 |

| Average Trained/Not Trained Scores | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| | Not | |
| Round | Trained | Trained |
| 1 | 6.83 | 4.98 |
| 2 | 6.29 | 5.01 |
| 3 | 6.32 | 5.43 |

Note: All scores are based on a scale from 0 (no correct answers) to 9 (all correct answers) to knowledge questions.

A review of the information in Table 5 shows the ability of the trained respondents to answer one more question correctly than the not-trained respondents. However, there is a recognizable increase in scores for the not-trained group whereas the trained group stayed relatively the same over time. This recognized increase is assumed to be the result of 1) efforts by project staff, who implemented office presentations throughout the State, and 2) information distribution activity that replaced the earlier traditional training that was given to 124 state workers. The decision to replace traditional training approaches with office presentations is discussed later in this report. In addition, there seems to be no other significant differences by cohort (i.e. location in NJ) or by round (i.e. surveys over time). Therefore, the evidence shows that those who gained knowledge from training or by other means (i.e. office presentations, etc.) did not significantly lose knowledge over time.

To further explore the potential changes in beliefs and behaviors, questions on these issues from the Needs Assessment were added to survey rounds 2 and 3. Table 6 contains the information collected from responders on these added questions.

Table 6: Comfortable and Confidence

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Round 2 | | | | | | |
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of NJ, but within the USA. | 10.5% | 8.8% | 5.3% | 19.3% | 42.1% | 14.0% |
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of the USA. | 14.9% | 19.3% | 12.3% | 19.3% | 30.7% | 3.5% |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of NJ, but within the USA. | 7.9% | 5.3% | 7.0% | 19.3% | 41.2% | 19.3% |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of the USA. | 15.0% | 17.7% | 14.2% | 17.7% | 31.0% | 4.4% |
| Round 3 | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of NJ, but within the USA. | 8.9% | 8.1% | 4.8% | 19.4% | 44.4% | 14.5% |
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of the USA. | 15.3% | 16.9% | 7.3% | 29.0% | 25.0% | 6.5% |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of NJ, but within the USA. | 7.3% | 4.8% | 2.4% | 21.0% | 46.0% | 18.5% |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of the USA. | 13.8% | 17.1% | 8.9% | 27.6% | 26.0% | 6.5% |

When comparing information from the Needs Assessment (i.e. a state-wide survey) to respondents in the quasi-experimental study (rounds 2 and 3), levels of respondents' understanding of available resources and confidence in one's ability have significantly improved. However, only minimal change is identified when comparing data from the quasi-experimental respondents alone.

Two questions asked during the quasi-experimental study were related to perceptions on changes in caseload. Both questions offered response options on a six point likert-type scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Table 7 presents the percentage selected for each of the six available responses.

Table 7: Reported Caseload Levels

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly Disagree | Slightly Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| I have more open child welfare cases that need relocating now than I did a month ago. | | | | | | |
| Round 1 (March 2011, N=161) | 48.4% | 34.8% | 6.8% | 5.0% | 3.7% | 1.2% |
| Round 2 (October 2011, N=68) | 36.8% | 32.4% | 10.3% | 7.4% | 7.4% | 5.9% |
| Round 3 (May 2012, N=67) | 31.3% | 50.7% | 1.5% | 6.0% | 9.0% | 1.5% |
| More of my open child welfare cases are potentially international than they were a month ago. | | | | | | |
| Round 1 (March 2011, N=161) | 48.4% | 36.6% | 4.3% | 5.6% | 4.3% | 0.6% |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|------|
| Round 2 (October 2011, N=65) | 41.5% | 38.5% | 1.5% | 10.8% | 4.6% | 3.1% |
| Round 3 (May 2012, N=68) | 39.7% | 41.2% | 5.9% | 7.4% | 5.9% | 0.0% |

There is a recognizable increase in Round 2 and 3 in the number of perceived open cases that need relocating, as well as for cases that have a potential international connection. This identified increase does follow the timeline of office presentations by the DCP&P’s International Liaison IL (IL), which were intended to bring more awareness to best practices in child welfare. Unfortunately, the small number of respondents who answered these two questions does not provide the opportunity to draw any conclusions about NJ caseworkers in general.

Focus Groups: To test the reliability and validity of the data collected from respondents in the quasi-experimental study, four focus groups (two groups of individuals who received training, and two groups who did not receive training) were conducted with the non-responders in the first round of the quasi-experimental study. Non-responders were selected to identify any similarities/differences to the responders, thereby verifying the reliability of the quasi-experimental data (i.e. no differences were identified between responders and non-responders). The information collected from the focus groups provided a detailed understanding of the training experience, a review of the level of knowledge gained from attending training, and additional insight into the beliefs and experiences of the DCP&P workforce related to international family finding and child welfare. Demographic information for the people who participated in the four focus groups is presented in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8: Data collected from two “Trained” Groups (N=18 people total)

| Level of Education | Age of Attendees | Job Titles of Attendees | Race | Years worked in Child welfare | Does participant have children |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| High School N=0 | Under 25 N=0 | Family Service Specialist N=6 | African American N=6 | 0-4 N=2 | Yes N=10 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Some college N=1 | 26-35 N=7 | Supervisor N=4 | Hispanic N=3 | 5-10 N=10 | No N=8 |
| Bachelor's N=10 | 36-45 N=4 | Intake worker N=2 | White N= 8 | 11-15 N=2 | |
| Some grad N=1 | 46-55 N =2 | Resource Fam. Support N=1 | Black/Puerto Rican N=1 | 16-20 N=2 | |
| Master's N=6 | 56+ N=2 | Investigator N=1 | | 20+ N=2 | |
| | | Manager N=1 | | | |
| | | Paralegal N=1 | | | |

Table 9: Data collected from two “Un-Trained” Groups (N=19 people total)

| Level of Education | Age of Attendees | Job Titles of Attendees | Race | Years worked in Child welfare | Does participant have children |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| High School N=0 | Under 25 N=2 | Family Serv. Spec N=7 | African American N =10 | 0-4 N=7 | Yes N=14 |
| Some college N=1 | 26-35 N=7 | Supervisor N=3 | Hispanic N=5 | 5-10 N=8 | No N=5 |
| Bachelor's N=9 | 36-45 N=4 | Paralegal N=1 | White N=3 | 11-15 N=1 | |
| Some grad N=2 | 46-55 N =4 | Intake worker N=3 | | 16-20 N=1 | |
| Master's N=6 | 56+ N=1 | Investigator N=2 | | 20+ N=2 | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | | Case manager N=1 | | | |
| | | Adoption Specialist N=1 | | | |
| | | Juvenile Court Liaison N= 1 | | | |

A comparison of the information collected from the focus groups and the data from the first round of the quasi-experimental study was the catalyst for redirecting the effort from the formal one-day training to a different approach, specifically the provision of office presentations by DCP&P’s International Liaison (IL). The evaluation team presented the finding from the review that clearly indicated that procedures presented in the one-day training were not being retained by those who were trained. An analysis of the focus group data indicated that even though general knowledge was reported as being helpful, the frequency with which caseworkers put learned procedures into practice was too low to retain the information on best practices. In addition, focus group participants shared their enthusiasm with having the IL available to offer assistance when working a case that involved an international component.

Combining the information from the focus groups, the amount of time and resources to appropriately train DCP&P’s workforce, and the frequency with which caseworkers were implementing international family finding procedures, the project team recognized the need to rethink conducting traditional training sessions. Given the collected evidence, replacing traditional training with office presentations by the IL was initiated.

ISS FAQ website and IL Activity Tracking: To evaluate the need for online information, a website was created to offer answers to frequently asked questions by those working with a case with an international component. The questions that are contained in the website were collected from those that were posed during the six one-day training sessions that occurred earlier in the project, and from ISS-USA’s experience over the years when helping individuals who are seeking assistance. There are 109 questions

and answers that make up the website. The link to the website was given to all attendees of training sessions and presentations, and posted on ISS-USA’s website. The only information captured by the evaluation team related to the FAQ website (www.iss-usa.org/trainingfaq) was which questions the visitors were reviewing and what state the visitor was from. Table 10 presents the number of people who visited the website by state during the last two years of the project.

Table 10: FAQ Website Visitors by State

| State | Count | State | Count |
|---------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Alabama | 5 | Missouri | 2 |
| Alaska | 1 | Montana | 1 |
| Arizona | 1 | New Jersey | 18 |
| California | 25 | New Mexico | 3 |
| Colorado | 10 | New York | 22 |
| Connecticut | 3 | North Carolina | 9 |
| Florida | 25 | North Dakota | 1 |
| Georgia | 3 | Ohio | 15 |
| Hawaii | 3 | Oklahoma | 5 |
| Illinois | 8 | Oregon | 5 |
| Indiana | 4 | Pennsylvania | 17 |
| Iowa | 1 | Rhode Island | 1 |
| Kansas | 6 | South Carolina | 2 |
| Kentucky | 1 | Tennessee | 1 |
| Louisiana | 4 | Texas | 5 |
| Maryland | 21 | Utah | 2 |
| Massachusetts | 10 | Virginia | 32 |
| Michigan | 9 | Washington | 2 |
| Minnesota | 12 | Wisconsin | 2 |

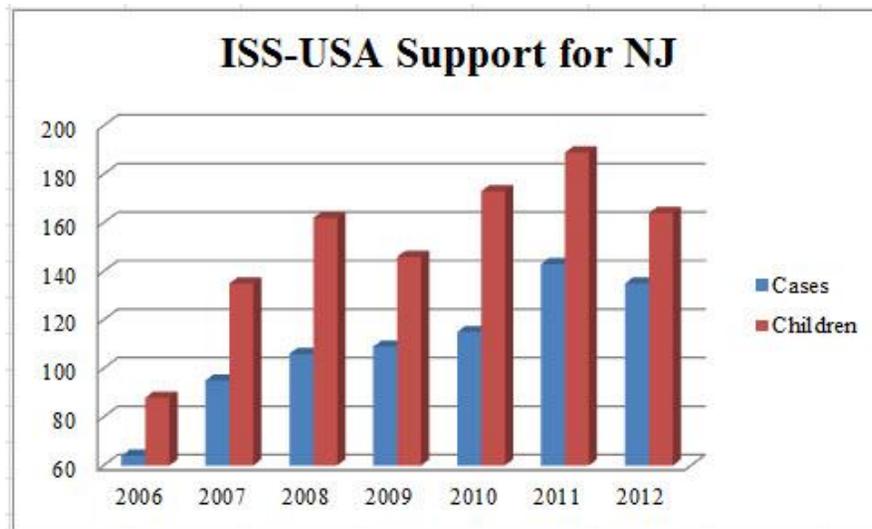
The distribution of numbers do not show an increase in website visits by individuals from New Jersey, suggesting that office presentations and the six training sessions did not initiate an increase in FAQ website visits or interest in exploring answers to frequently asked questions online.

The DCP&P International Liaison (IL) position was created from project funds and was established to be a single point of contact and available resource for DCP&P workers requesting assistance with child welfare cases that have an international component. At the time the decision was made to have the IL conduct office presentations throughout the state, the evaluation team created an online activity tracking process. The process included a one-page list of questions that allowed the IL to record activity related to the project. Unfortunately, non-compliance to activity recording procedures poses a threat to the validity of the recorded data. The threat is significant enough that the data are not included in the evaluation.

Longitudinal ISS-USA Activity: ISS-USA conducted a case review of office activity. The review collected the number of cases and children associated with the cases from 2006 to September 2012. Figure 5 presents the numbers from the case review, which includes a forecast for 2012 based on case/child count data for the first 9 months.

Using the forecasted numbers for 2012, the averages for the first three years prior to training and office presentations are 103.3 cases and 147.7 children per year. Averages for the following three years after training and during office presentations are 131.0 cases and 175.2 children per year.

Figure 5: Referrals to ISS-USA from NJ DCP&P



When compared to levels prior to this project, average differences represent an increase of 30 cases and 28 children per year. However, without additional information the sustainability of these increases cannot be predicted.

Final Statewide Survey: Close to the end of this three year project, a final statewide survey was conducted. The importance of this final survey was that many of the questions asked at the beginning of the three years (i.e. within the Needs Assessment survey) were asked. The duplication of asking these questions (i.e. pre-post surveys) provided the opportunity to look for changes in beliefs, practices, and experienced barriers. Statistical t-tests were used to look for significant differences (i.e. changes) at the end of the three years.

Table 11 presents the analysis of the data from six questions related to casework activity, worker understanding, and confidence in one's ability.

Table 11: Comparison of Understanding and Confidence

| Please respond by selecting your best answer, from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”: | Pre-test | Post-test |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| My office frequently assists with cases outside of NJ but within the USA.** | 4.18 N = 378 | 4.47 N = 837 |
| My office frequently assists with cases outside the USA.** | 2.58 N = 368 | 3.47 N = 829 |
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of NJ but within the USA.** | 3.74 N = 374 | 4.09 N = 832 |
| I am comfortable in my understanding of the resources to assist with a placement outside of the USA.** | 2.30 N = 368 | 3.21 N = 832 |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of NJ but within the USA.** | 4.03 N = 374 | 4.34 N = 832 |
| I am confident in my ability to facilitate cases outside of the USA.** | 2.50 N = 378 | 3.16 N = 836 |

Note. The scale ranged from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree). T-tests were conducted to determine statistically significant differences from Pre-test to Post-test. An asterisk (*) signified a statistically significant difference. **p < .01

The pre-survey data represents information collected at the start of the project (i.e. Needs Assessment survey) and the post-survey data represents information at the end of the project (i.e. Final Statewide survey). The results of the analysis show that the pre-survey levels for all six questions are significantly different from the reported post-survey responses. Specifically, the respondents’ comfort in their understanding of resources to assist with a placement outside the USA has significantly increased since the start of the project. In addition, reported confidence in ability to facilitate cases outside of the USA has also significantly increased.

Reported frequency for assisting with cases outside the USA has also increased significantly. This significant increase is reflected in the data provided by ISS-USA that is presented in Figure 5, and the information from the quasi-experimental surveys presented in Table 7.

Two additional significant increases identified are presented in Table 12. The first is the reported level of office support comparing cases within NJ and those reaching outside of NJ. This increase presents a supportive office environment that should promote the movement of more children out of or from entering foster care. The other identified significant increase is related to the belief that “All kids deserve the opportunity to be raised in the USA.”

Table 12: Comparison of Beliefs and Perceptions

| Please respond by selecting your best answer, from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”: | Pre-test | Post-test |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| My office offers the same level of support for cases outside of NJ when compared to cases in NJ.* | 3.66 (N = 360) | 3.89 (N = 817) |
| The needs of children are better served in the US regardless of their family situation. | 3.06 (N = 357) | 3.23 (N = 812) |
| I’m only confident with home studies when they are completed by DYFS. | 3.10 (N = 358) | 3.23 (N = 806) |
| All kids deserve the opportunity to be raised in the USA.** | 3.02 (N = 350) | 3.31 (N = 803) |
| Children should to be in a permanent home with family regardless of location within or outside of the USA. | 4.95 (N = 366) | 5.04 (N = 822) |
| Evaluating quality or circumstances of a prospective caregiver is more challenging outside of NJ compared to placement options within NJ. | 4.45 (N = 360) | 4.50 (N = 820) |

Note. The scale ranged from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree). T-tests were conducted to determine statistically significant differences from Pre-test to Post-test. An asterisk (*) signified a statistically significant difference. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Unfortunately, this increase is not in the desired direction and was not supported in the training and office presentations. The reason for this unwanted increase is due to the possibility that caseworkers with this belief may be more resistant to pursuing international family connections. Other questions in Table 13 follow this same theoretical premise for beliefs. Like the Needs Assessment survey, questions on perceived barriers to international casework were included in the Final Statewide survey.

Table 13: Experienced Barriers to International Casework

| Post-test | |
|--|-------------------|
| Please respond by selecting your best answer with regards to your casework, from “Significant Barrier” to “Very Helpful”: | |
| Supervisor when working with cases reaching outside of NJ | 3.78 (N = 624) |
| Litigation personnel when working with cases reaching outside of NJ | 3.62 (N = 691) |
| Coworkers (other than supervisor and litigation personnel) when working with cases reaching outside of NJ | 3.82 (N = 650) |
| Past training and workshops when working with cases reaching outside of NJ | 2.91 (N = 737) |
| Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) office when working with cases reaching outside of NJ | 3.67 (N = 609) |

Note. The scale ranged from one (significant barrier) to six (very helpful).

Table 13 presents the average response on a six-point likert-type scale for five pre-selected potential barriers; supervisors, litigation personnel, coworkers, past training and workshops, and ICPC. The area identified as being the least helpful is past training and workshops, while coworkers are identified as being the most helpful. Past training and workshops average score is the lowest of the five potential barriers, which is similar to information collected during the focus groups.

Evaluation Discussion

A review of the collected data show substantial evidence that the three-year project has influenced the activities associated with international child welfare in the state of New Jersey. Confidence in working international cases and the level of understanding of available resources have significantly increased. Many more cases are reaching the ISS-USA office, which logically translates into more children finding appropriate family connections and avoiding entering foster care.

The various data collection strategies implemented for the project provided multiple opportunities by the evaluation team to validate the data and themes identified in the information provided by respondents. However, probably the most surprising finding and one that provided the most conflicts in the data involves the effectiveness of the one-day training. Data from the training surveys shows a high level of satisfaction, and requests for training were a common theme in the information collected. However, information from the focus group participants was not supportive of the one-day training. Participants were not reporting a significant increase in their knowledge of international family connections, and were concerned that the farther away they got from the training the less they were able to recall the once taught best practices. Another reported concern by the participants was the loss of an entire day in their schedule, which impacted their ability to keep up with their caseload. Therefore, the evidence suggested that even though training (i.e. the traditional way to disseminate workforce best practices) was being requested, the overall effectiveness of the training was not high enough to warrant losing an entire workday. This evidence was supported further by a statistically insignificant but identifiable decline of correct answers from the trained quasi-experimental study participants (Table 5).

Since only 124 people received training, any changes in beliefs, practices, and experienced barriers can be associated with office presentations and distributed materials, which took the place of traditional training. The International Liaison (IL) conducted the presentations throughout the state starting in 2011 at a rate of approximately two presentations a week. Since presentation effectiveness was not part of the original evaluation design, the level of IL presentation effectiveness in delivering information is evaluated indirectly using multiple avenues. The two most important means through which data were collected were via the case activity data collected by ISS-USA and the comparison of the Needs Assessment data to the Final Statewide Survey data. These two avenues present evidence of an effective method in educating the workforce on international family connection, spreading awareness of available support resources, and introducing best practices.

The largest challenge the evaluation team faces is the change in the focus for the evaluation to reach beyond a basic training evaluation design. The need to be more comprehensive in understanding workforce beliefs, knowledge gain, and experiences stretched the available resources for completing the evaluation. A second significant challenge was the inability to collect daily activity from the International Liaison. Unfortunately, this inability resulted in a limitation in drawing conclusions related to this aspect of the project.

As mentioned above, one limitation was not having the data to fully understand the level of activity required of the International Liaison. A second limitation was the restriction of access to potential participants for the longitudinal quasi-experimental study, which consequently kept the evaluation from initiating a truly randomized selection of participants. A third limitation was the low response rates for the Needs Assessment and Final NJ Survey which weakens the ability to conclude the respondents represent the targeted population. However, the collected descriptive data from these surveys showed no signs of being non-representative.

VII) Conclusions

Over the course of the project ISS-USA provided intercountry services to 424 children unique children with some of those children having 4 or more services provided. ISS-USA counts a service as a case, not a child. Therefore, one case could involve multiple children, and one child could have multiple cases. There are two aspects of this project that differ from some of the other grantee projects. First, ISS-USA did not close a case until the case was completed at DCP&P. Therefore, there are still some cases for which ISS-USA does not have a final outcome. ISS-USA continues to track the outcome of all cases opened during the tenure of the grant. Second, ISS-USA continued to receive referrals for service from DCP&P until the last day of the grant. We believed that it was important to provide services to as many children as possible in order to collect outcome data that will have real meaning and analytic purpose. Cases for which services had been completed but DCP&P kept open awaiting a final outcome were

placed in “pending” status. At the conclusion of the grant period (September 30, 2012) 125 cases were closed because a final outcome had been reached by DCP&P, 215 cases remained in pending status awaiting the final disposition of the case with DCP&P and 48 cases remain open. Of the cases that were closed by the end of the 3 year project AND were not cancelled by DCP&P prior to service being provided by ISS-USA 93.6% had the requested service completed.

The intent of this project was to increase permanency options for every child in DCP&P care who had a family connection in another country. The impact of this goal is, of course, enormous. The project both promoted best practices in family finding and engagement, while also protecting the child’s rights to her family, and the parent’s rights of notification and inclusion. Some of the most memorable cases involved locating a non-custodial parent in a foreign country to terminate her/his rights only to discover that they had no idea their child was in care. Several of these cases turned into the child being reunified with his parent. Many of the children served through the project were either permanently reunited with family, or visited family overseas. The importance of these connections cannot be minimized. Even when a permanent placement was not possible many children found family that could be a potential resource when they age out of the system if no other permanent plan has been reached. Many parents and grandparents, and other extended family, were first notified about a child in care because of the work of ISS-USA. These family members were then given the opportunity to actively participate in planning for the child’s future even when there was no possibility that the child would be placed with them.

ISS-USA received 457 referrals for service over the three years of the grant. Of these, 388 were opened for service and 69 were given a “Cannot Open Letter” to document due diligence. At the conclusion of the project 342 cases were either closed by DCP&P because they had reached a permanency decision (127), or were in pending status at ISS-USA because ISS-USA had completed service on the case but was awaiting the final disposition of the case from DCP&P. The remaining 48 are open and continue to receive services.

While it is difficult to discern the exact impact of the project on the partner organizations we can say with complete confidence that the DCP&P staff have been referring cases for international case

management to ISS-USA at an ever increasing rate (2013 data indicates that ISS-USA will receive approximately double the number of referrals from FY 2012. To date ISS-USA has opened 78 cases involving 93 children for DCP&P.). Furthermore, these cases continue to run the gamut of geographic location which is a testament to the fact that DCP&P staff is increasingly asking **every** child and family on their case load about international family connections. Third, ISS-USA is receiving a growing number of requests for technical assistance on complicated cases with an international dimension. Many of these include cases with an immigration or legal dimension that crosses an international border. Fourth, the impact of the training and the awareness campaign on the DCP&P staff can be seen in the fact that an ever increasing number of stakeholders in cases involving DCP&P are also beginning to get the information they need to refer cases or request technical assistance. These include CASA staff, legal and judicial partners in the permanency planning process and parents or extended family members of children in care. Anecdotally we know that there is far less hesitancy among DCP&P workers to explore possible international family finding than there was prior to the implementation of the project. The increasing number of **individual** DCP&P employees who are now making referrals and requesting technical assistance supports this assertion. Prior to the project there was fewer individual staff making referrals. Rather, the trend was that a small number of staff was making multiple referrals each year.

There is clear evidence that the three year project has improved the confidence and knowledge of caseworkers in New Jersey, and that more caseworkers are seeking assistance with cases that reach outside of the USA. In addition, as part of this project DCP&P created and approved a new policy for caseworkers in NJ. The new policy outlines the need to consider every child in the care of DCP&P for a potential international family connection. This translates into the conclusion that this three-year project has improved DCP&P's office environment and created better outcomes for children in New Jersey.

Another issue supported by the evidence is the decision to replace traditional training with IL office presentations. Combining the increases in reported case activity by ISS-USA, the responses from the focus groups, the responses on the knowledge questions in the quasi-experimental study, and the few number of traditionally training personnel (i.e. 124) indicates that the office presentations were

effective. How much more effective than traditional training is unknown, but comparing the amount of required resources and the time away from office activity for each training method, there is clear support for the office presentation approach.

Two important issues must be explored to understand the ongoing impact of this project on NJ child welfare. The first issue relates to sustainability. Will the improvements in office environments and the increases in ISS-USA case activity continue? The other issue that warrants further exploration is related to the International Liaison (IL). What activities, availability, and frequency of office presentations are necessary for the IL to be effective? Obviously, these two issues are related since the effectiveness of the IL is associated with the sustainability of accomplished improvements. Therefore, it is highly recommended for future evaluation to explore the effective levels of engagement for the IL, and to identify how related the effectiveness of the IL is to increases in international casework.

The impact on ISS-USA has been, perhaps, the most notable. Despite its small size ISS-USA was quite stagnant in its case practice and its service provision model. Very few changes had taken place to: 1) reduce the amount of time it was taking for a case to be completed, 2) determine if there was any added value to a case because of ISS-USA involvement, 3) determine if ISS-USA was offering the right kinds of services, or offering services that were unnecessary, and 4) determine if case managers were provided with the necessary support to handle a growing case load. Over the course of the project all these issues were addressed that resulted in some important changes to both case practice internally at ISS-USA and in the development of new international partners and case practice protocols. The results were that 1) ISS-USA reduced the number of days a case was open from 263 to under 75, 2) ISS-USA stopped offering some services and began offering others, 3) ISS-USA stopped opening cases that had no, or an extremely limited, likelihood of ever being completed, and, 4) developed MOUs with social workers in three key regions to provide quicker, better and more reliable service.

The impact on the child welfare remains to be seen. We can say with certainty that the State of New Jersey is pursuing family finding without concern for where that family finding may lead. Unlike virtually every other state in the union New Jersey is diligently and comprehensively using key family finding

techniques to ensure that all possible family connections are found, assessed and made when appropriate. We can also say that there are likely many more children in the care of New Jersey who have family connections that have not yet been identified. No other state can demonstrate that they are rigorously and routinely searching for children's family in foreign countries with the frequency that it is occurring in New Jersey.

One of the key frustrations of this project was that, despite repeated exposure of other grantees to the work of ISS-USA and frequent questions about how to use our services, not a single referral was made to ISS-USA from any of the family finding grantees. This is true despite the fact that several of the grantee agencies inquired about cases they themselves were working on. While ISS-USA provided technical assistance on how to manage these cases we are left wondering what happened to those children, and their families.

There is still a disturbing tendency in public child welfare systems to: 1) not ask every child and family about family connections in other jurisdictions, 2) assume that a non-custodial parent in a foreign country does not want to be involved in her/his child's life and move directly to TPR rather than notification of the parent, 3) refuse to consider the possibility that a child can thrive in a home in a foreign country as easily as in a home in the United States, and 4) assume that only certain children who physically look a particular way, or who have a particular last name, or speak a foreign language are the only children with international family connections. Importantly, while case workers make assumptions about children who may have foreign born family, they are exploring the possibility that a child may have American citizen relatives living in a foreign country.

On the other hand, ISS-USA continues to receive a growing number of referrals from states with large immigrant populations, for service in a growing number of countries. In fact, the top ten countries where services are needed include Canada, Australia, the UK and Poland. There is beginning to be a recognition among case workers who are utilizing good family finding techniques that the connections to foreign family in the United States is not limited to children of Mexican descent.

The overwhelming success of this project indicates that 1) there are a growing number of children in the care of the American public child welfare system who have international family connections that MUST be engaged in permanency planning, 2) informing key stakeholder in the permanency planning process about the resources available to locate and engage family living overseas improves the likelihood that a child will be connected to her family, and a permanency outcome will be reached more quickly, 3) cooperation among the legal, judicial and social work partners in the permanency planning process improves the likelihood that key family members will be identified to be included in the permanency planning process, and 4) there must be national support for international family finding and engagement if we are to truly work in the best interest of every child in the care of the public child welfare system in our nation.

Throughout the course of the project there were several key implementation facilitators that led to the ultimate success of the project. The key thing that facilitated the implementation of the project, however, was the collaborative, cooperative relationship built among the three parties to the project: ISS-USA, Rutgers University and DCF DCP&P. The following activities encouraged these relationships, and will sustain the project now that it has concluded:

- Open and honest communication both by phone and in regular meetings allowed for the initial relationship building necessary to move the project forward.
- Everyone on team willing to work hard and pull their weight. Each part of the team took responsibility to ensuring that work was completed in a timely and professional manner;
- Meetings took an action /problem solving approach rather than simply a time to socialize;
- Willingness to be flexible when changes were needed to the project and the evaluation model when needed;
- Support from DCF Commissioner
- The development of clear and consistent protocols and procedures coupled with ability to make changes as needed.

There are inevitably barriers and obstacles to any new innovation and this project is no exception to that rule. However, considering the scope of the project, the size of two of the three entities involved, and the complexity of the service models, the barriers were minimal. More importantly, the barriers were

seen, not as insurmountable, entrenched problems, but simply an opportunity to rethink our approach to overcome these obstacles. The major obstacles encountered over the three years of the grant were:

- *Working through the large bureaucracy of DCP&P lead to difficulties in collecting data from DCP&P*
 - As ISS-USA staff and the DYFS liaison worked together to compile all of the outcome data on final placements of children involved in ISS-DYFS cases, it became apparent that it was a more complicated and time-consuming task than originally planned. ISS-USA and DYFS maintain separate case files with different coding systems and often identifying information, not directly related to the specific request, is withheld from ISS caseworkers due to confidentiality mandates. This resulted in a time consuming process of connecting each ISS-USA case file to the appropriate child in question within the DYFS electronic database to determine the current status of the case and the child's placement. In addition, there are a select group of children whose placement we are still trying to determine.

- *Delay in dissemination of Post-Training Evaluation Surveys*
 - Due to a variety of circumstances including questions about DCF protocol, miscommunication and obtaining e mail addresses has caused delays in the dissemination of the post-training evaluation surveys, and thus a delay in the analysis of the data expected from these surveys.

- *IL Activity Data Collection*
 - There have been significant obstacles to data input on activities conducted by the IL.
 - Multiple data collection tools have been tried but there appears to be resistance by the IL to fully participate in the data collection.
 - The Project Director at ISS is working closely with the IL's supervisors to ensure compliance with data collection requirements. There have been significant obstacles to data input on activities conducted by the IL.

- *Delays on Policy Implementation*
 - The final NY- DYFS policy related to working with international cases and resources from ISS-USA has not been implemented but is in the final stages of review by the state.

- *Difficulty in last round of the longitudinal survey*
 - There were significant technological delays in implementing the final round of the longitudinal survey due to the internal firewall at DYFS. These issues were resolved and the survey has been completed.

- *Contract and Staffing Difficulties*
 - There were some initial difficulties in coming to a workable agreement about 1) the use of data collected by Rutgers School of Social Work and 2) the ownership of the intellectual property including training materials. A fair compromise was reached and the contract with Rutgers has been finalized to the satisfaction of both parties to the

agreement. There were some initial difficulties in coming to a workable agreement with DCF about 1) the use of data collected by ISS-USA, 2) ownership of the intellectual property including training materials, 3) concerns about confidentiality. A fair compromise was reached and the contract with DCF has been finalized to the satisfaction of both parties to the agreement.

- Due to contract difficulties the International Liaison was not hired until September 2010.
- *Staffing Difficulties:* There have been some challenges with unexpected staffing changes that have, by and large, been resolved but do account for some delays in project activities. These difficulties were:
 - The P.I. at Rutgers went on premature maternity leave
 - The Director for Rutgers IFF was appointed as Commissioner of DCF
 - The curriculum developer changed unexpectedly in July
 - The representative of DCF who worked most closely on the project was promoted to Acting Deputy Director of DYFS limiting the time she can devote to the project
 - ISS-USA Case manager is scheduled for maternity leave earlier than expected
 - ISS-USA Case manager left the agency in December.
 - A new ISS-USA Case Manager was hired on February 1st, 2011.
 - The role of Rutgers PI was moved to the Lead Evaluator at Rutgers.
- *Need to get learn the DCP&P lingo and the inner workings of their case practice model*
- *Inability to distinguish between kinship foster or adoptive parents and non-kinship foster or adoptive parents.*
 - With a case ID and closing outcome, the status of the relative as a foster/adoptive parent can be determined. However, DYFS' process is to license everyone (even relatives) as foster parents, who then may become adoptive parents. This requires additional research to separate out relative caregivers and non-relative caregivers.
- *Complexity of the work: more and more complicated cases*
- *Continued problems with the translation of court documents*
 - DCF-DYFS continues to struggle with how to obtain translations of court documents to be served on non-English speakers outside of the United States. In an effort to resolve this, the International Liaison has compiled a working list of resources for DCF-DYFS workers.
- *Increase in complex cases being referred*
 - There has been an increase in the number of highly complex, and high-profile cases that require increased attention and activity from the case management staff. ISS-USA has worked closely with its federation partners to ensure prompt and diligent services.
- *Need for more and detailed protocols and procedures (example – case closing forms so can learn the outcomes of children as it is often much later than when the service is completed)*

VII) Recommendations

Based on the lessons learned and the overwhelming success of the project ISS-USA and Rutgers University make the following recommendations:

A. Provide recommendations to administrators of future, similar projects.

- Learn the internal case practice and service provision model of the public agency with whom you are working as early in the process as possible;
- Schedule regular meetings either in person or by phone (at least once every 6 weeks for the first year);
- Set specific expectations for regular communication and the quality of products produced at the onset of the project. Different agencies and organizations have standards so it is important that every person know what is expected of them for this project.
- Establish protocols for raising concerns or grievances with another project partner or staff person.
- Diligently record data and require that all individuals who must record data to do so.
- Provide training and oversight to ensure that the data is being collected and recorded accurately and that what is being collected is the data that is needed for the project.
- Allow the different experts to take the lead on various phases of the project. Take a strength based approach to working with your partners. Assume your project is enhancing an existing, useful program, not fixing a broken program or inventing something new;
- Be flexible. Everything looks simple on paper, but when you are implementing new procedures, protocols or ideas things can get off course quickly. Allow for changes in approach or method to meet the needs of your partners and the project;
- Never underestimate the importance of the evaluation portion of your project. Data collection and analysis should be rigorously adhered to and frequently updated;
- Don't train **all** frontline employees if training is part of your project. Restrict training to key personnel. An awareness campaign can provide necessary information in a user friendly way that supports on-going information sharing.
- Write things down. Create written protocol of all key procedures and activities so project members have a resource to refer to when carrying out project activities. This will also help with ensuring quality implementation of project interventions or activities. Written protocol can also be used for training for any new staff.
- Be solution-based. Complex projects will have obstacles so it is important to think creatively when figuring out the implementation of the project goals and activities.

B. Provide recommendations to project funders (Children's Bureau).

- Develop resources to build awareness that it is common for children involved with public child welfare systems to have family resources outside that jurisdiction, and often the country (i.e., cross-borders). These family resources are often U.S. citizens living outside the country due to work, education, military deployment, Foreign Service, or retirement.
- Emphasize the importance of including family regardless of their geographic location, language spoken, citizenship status, incarceration, etc.
- Develop resources to help social workers, lawyers, judges and other stakeholders work with children with cross border family issues;

- Emphasize the growing number of children who need family finding and engagement support with family internationally;
- Push for nation-wide family finding case practice and demand accountability;
- Fund a national resource center on international child welfare and child protection;
- Help promote best practices for legal, social work, judicial and advocates on cross-border family finding both domestically and internationally.
- Create more opportunities for federally funded projects to share their work and to work collaboratively.

C. Provide recommendations to the child welfare field.

- Implement universal family finding and engagement in your case practice model. Demand accountability;
- Look for family for kids in your care regardless of where their family may be;
- Educate your staff on the resources available to help in international cases;
- Do not assume family in another country does not care about a child in your care;
- Remember that American citizen children may have American citizen family in a foreign country;
- You cannot tell by looking at a child, or knowing her last name or what language she speaks at home if she has international family connections.
- Doing work outside the U.S. is not drastically different or any more difficult but does involve understanding the difference between systems
- Just because something can be done within the U.S., does not mean it is possible outside the U.S. [ok, you can word this better – i.e., can't just show up in another country to do a home study]
- When working internationally, there are often international conventions, visa and immigration requirements that need to be met.