

3. Canadian Government "Our Missing Children" Program

This Program involves three federal government departments comprising the RCMP's Missing Children's Registry, Customs Canada's International Project Return, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The three elements operate as one unit under one roof, at RCMP headquarters in Ottawa. The Program's objective is to locate and return abducted children.

Following a request from the local police, Customs can immediately have a border alert distributed to the member countries of the International Customs Union. The RCMP component, the Missing Children's Registry, is associated with the global police network INTERPOL, through which it will assist any Canadian police agency in co-ordinating investigations abroad.

Among the services offered through the RCMP's Missing Children's Registry is the **Travel Reunification Program**, which is designed to help parents or guardians who cannot afford to pay the cost of having an abducted child returned to Canada. This Program is supported by Air Canada, Canadian Airlines International, Via Rail and Choice Hotels Canada Inc. They will provide transportation and accommodation, if they serve the required locations. In order to qualify for travel assistance, the following guidelines must be met:

- ❖ The request for assistance must come from the investigating police department, the provincial/territorial central authority or the Consular Operations and Emergency Services Division.
- ❖ The requesting agency is responsible for assessing the financial status of the family and determining if free transportation should be provided.
- ❖ The service is only available to return a child abducted by a parent.
- ❖ The requesting agency must ensure that all necessary documents for the return of the child to Canada are in order.
- ❖ A parent or guardian will not be sent overseas unless all legal steps have been taken for the return of the child to Canada and the local authorities are co-operating in the return.

4. The Media

Publicity can be both helpful and detrimental in international child abductions. It is important, therefore, that you discuss the matter of publicity with your local police and/or your lawyer. Insofar as publicity overseas is concerned, you should discuss the matter with the Consular Operations and Emergency Services Division. In some countries, publicity could affect the willingness or ability of local authorities to assist in the return of your child. It may also cause the abducting parent to go into hiding and, in so doing, create further stress and danger for your child.

5. Search Agencies

A number of private organizations will carry out search activities on your behalf for a fee and/or expenses. You should obtain advice and guidance from professionals, including the local police and non-governmental organizations (see Part D of Section VII for addresses), before engaging such agencies to act on your behalf. If you do decide to engage such an organization, it is important to have your lawyer involved in any negotiations, to protect your financial interests and to ensure that the proposed activities do not further complicate the search for and recovery of your child.