

International Task Force on Child Protection | February 2015 Report

SAN FRANCISCO MEETINGS AND PRESENTATION

Dear Colleagues,

Last month in San Francisco, founding members and volunteers of the International Task Force on Child Protection (ITFCP) came together for working meetings to advance our initiatives and report on our progress during a General Session at the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE) Conference. A panel of Task Force members presented and took questions from the audience of school leaders. The session was well attended, and we hope we provided a valuable learning experience for those who assembled.

During the session, the Committee Chairs each provided an update on their progress and next steps. Fernando Matus, Criminal Investigative Liaison and Branch Chief of the US Department of State Diplomatic Security Service, joined the panel to speak on the topics of Preparation, Prevention and Reporting.

Committee Reports, resources and a copy of the AAIE presentation can be found at the [CIS website](#).

What have we accomplished and where do we go from here?

School Recruitment Committee

The committee's findings emphasize that ultimately, accountability and responsibility for employee screening and selection lie with the school. Recruiting agencies have many different business models and in the marketplace, schools can select agencies that meet their needs, ranging from a full scale out-sourced screening approach including background checks and validated credentials, to a mass-market approach with no screening whatsoever.

The committee recommends that schools include the following steps as a minimum:

- Candidate profile review
- Reference checks/verbal contact with current employers to verify performance and good conduct
- Identity and credentials verification
- Background Checks including:
 - Criminal Records
 - Police Records
 - Offender Registry checks



Next steps:

The committee proposed a pilot of the recommended checks to determine practical means of implementation and to develop procedures further. Schools will be asked to participate once the intended outcomes for the pilot are established.

School Policies and Resources Committee

The Committee's deliberations highlighted the importance of considering the school's context in the determining site-specific policies, and the committee's objective was refined accordingly. Projects completed:

- Identified an organization to host resources specifically for international schools, where abuse can also be reported and referred to law enforcement for investigation: International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC)
- Created a set of case studies for schools to review and consider as possible scenarios within their communities, in order to develop suitable policies for their communities
- Created a list of discussion questions aligned with the case studies
- Held an Indian task force meeting to assess community resources; evaluated a Community Needs Assessment Framework
- Initiated development of a list of experts to provide advice and conduct training

Next steps:

1. Liaise with ICMEC to establish the architecture for the website of resources.
2. Collect feedback on the usefulness of the Community Needs Assessment Framework and develop the model.
3. Expand and vet the list of experts available for training and guidance.

School Evaluation Committee

The committee collected and reviewed accreditation and inspection protocols from a wide range of school evaluation agencies, noting a significant variation in the extent of child protection standards. They then identified a number of areas of omission. In draft form, 24 essential questions were debated at the Committee meeting, and 5 key areas were identified in which accreditation/inspection standards should apply, referring to 12 exemplary practices that schools should adopt to promote high levels of child protection. The five key areas are:

- Professional development and training of school leaders and staff
- Proactive approach; having effective policies and practices in place ("What to do when...!")
- Ensuring students' learning on protective practices takes place within the written curriculum
- Recruitment of staff
- Implementing a regular review of child protection measures

Following a review of the Committee's recommendations and subsequent discussion, there was agreement in principle by **all the accrediting agencies** to the eventual adoption of new standards to strengthen child protection practices in our schools. A new area of weakness was uncovered during a discussion by the Alliance for School Accreditation - that of homestays for students from outside the local school community. We will ensure this point is addressed by the School Evaluation Committee.

Next steps:

1. Present the essential questions and key areas to the British inspection agencies.
2. Collect feedback and create a small working group to draft new standards for review by all accrediting/inspecting agencies.
3. Finalize the new standards and present them to the Task Force for review.

ITFCP Panel Presentation – AAIE General Session

Fernando Matus from the US Department of State Diplomatic Security Service reminded us of our legal obligations:

- “International Schools are not islands”
- Establish relationships in advance
 - Police/Prosecutors
 - Hospitals/Social workers
 - NGOs
 - Other schools in-country
 - Incorporate into your response procedures

He reminded us of our duty to report suspected abuse, to be informed of the applicable laws in the country, and to predetermine a process to evaluate allegations.

An effective international reporting point for suspected or known child abuse: www.cybertip.org (ICMEC/US NCMEC reporting site)

Questions and Comments from the audience:

- What sort of timeline does Interpol have to develop a certificate of good conduct?
- Answer: An Interpol working group will begin a feasibility study in May. We will take part in the discussions and report on progress to the international education community. There is a high degree of interest in the resource we have been compiling of country-specific police background check procedures. They believe it could be useful to share effective practices across borders to help countries where systems are lacking. [Note: This resource is continually expanding and improving.]
- In writing references for teachers, there’s apprehension about legal repercussions. Has language been developed as advice for those writing references?
- Answer: The Recruitment Committee will develop language in consultation with legal experts and share this information with the international community.
- Has the committee decided what to do about child abuse that occurs in the home?
- Answer: This question arose during discussion in the School Evaluation Committee and during discussion of the Alliance of School Accreditation. It will be addressed through the development of guiding questions for schools and the resulting recommended standards.
- Will all of this work be put into a single place for schools’ access?
- Answer: Currently an ITFCP Dropbox is available to anyone who wishes access. A permanent home for resources will be established at the ICMEC website.



- What is the role of the recruiting agencies?
- Answer: The School Recruitment Committee's findings emphasize that ultimately, accountability and responsibility for employee screening and selection lie with the school. Recruiting agencies have many different business models and in the marketplace schools can select agencies that meet their needs, ranging from a full scale out-sourced screening approach including background checks and validated credentials, to a mass-market approach where all screening is undertaken by the school itself.
- How involved has the committee been with psychiatrists in your work?
- Answer: The first meeting of the Task Force featured a presentation by one of the world's leading experts in child abuse: Michael Bourke, Chief Psychologist of the US Marshals' Service Behavioral Analysis Unit, US Department of Justice, USA. Since that time, we have identified other notable psychologists who work in this field, and will be updating the list of experts available to train and guide school communities.
- Recommendation from Tim Carr: "Have a third party investigator that you trust on speed dial! Schools are not in the business of law enforcement..."
- Recommendation from Rick Detwiler: "Consider the role of school boards in child protection issues."
- Recommendation from Alan Conkey: "Don't forget to screen the spouses when hiring staff."

International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC)

Last Friday, Christy Brown, Fernando Matus and I traveled to Alexandria, Virginia to meet Maura Harty, ICMEC's new Executive Director. Christy and Fernando introduced us to ICMEC and have been exploring the potential to work collaboratively to establish a web-based resource center on child protection education, with a focus on international challenges and reporting. Collaboration with ICMEC has high impact potential, combining resources and training with an international reporting point for suspected and known abuse through the Tipline (see link above). Staffed by professionals trained as first-responders to assess reports, provide counseling and direct-line reporting to national law enforcement agencies to investigate crimes, they are a valuable resource for international educators dealing with suspected abuse.

ICMEC has a source of funding to create a new website which will include resources for the international community. We will proceed with our discussions and planning.

Our next meeting / London, Tuesday 12th Mar (Date to be confirmed)

All volunteer Task Force Members are welcome to join working meetings of the Committees to ensure we continue to make timely progress. The meetings will be held in London following the COBIS Annual Conference. As soon as we've selected the venue, we'll provide further specifics. Once again, we'll invite experts in the field of Child Protection to provide us with advice and guidance.

Future Child Protection Learning Opportunities (Jan-June 2015)

- AASSA Conference – Curacao March 2015
See the [AASSA website](#).
- AISA Conference – Child Protection Symposium Cape Town March 2015
See the [AISA website](#).
- NESAC Conference – Istanbul March 2015
See the [NESAC website](#).
- EARCOS Heads' Institute April 2015
See the [EARCOS website](#).
- ECIS Conference – Brussels April 2015
See the [ECIS website](#).
- COBIS Annual Conference London May 2015
See the [COBIS website](#).

On behalf of the Task Force Members, and in your service,

Jane Larsson
Chair, International Task Force on Child Protection

Downloads

- [Community Assessment of Child Protection Practices](#)
- [ITFCP School Evaluation - 24 Essential Questions](#)
- [ITFCP Conference Presentation AAIE - Findings & Recommendations](#)
- [Police Background Check Procedures by Country](#)

Members of the Task Force

- Colin Bell, CEO, Council of British International Schools (in liaison with BSME, FOBISIA, LAHC and NABSS)
- Bambi Betts, Executive Director, Academy of International School Heads
- Christine Brown, Regional Education Officer for Europe, U.S. Department of State, Office of Overseas Schools
- Linda Duevel, President-elect, Association for the Advancement of International Education
- Roger Hove, President, International Schools Services
- Jane Larsson, Executive Director, Council of International Schools (Chair)
- Kevin Ruth, Executive Director, ECIS