

Children Displaced Across Borders

Best Interests Panel

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Background:

The United States has not ratified the UNCRC, and has no formal legislative or policy push to consider the best interests of the child. However, many states have legislation that does require courts to consider best interests when making decisions regarding minors. The definition of best interests is very vague and differs from state to state, but in general refers to the court's deliberation in determining what type of services, actions, and orders will best serve the child. It has always been my position that a child's best interests cannot be met if she does not have an advocate at her side who is helping her voice what it is she wants.

- ❖ A child's best interests are to be served in making decisions regarding a child's placement.
 - Health
 - Education
 - Protection

- ❖ Incorporating Best Interests in the States
 - Interagency Working Group
 - Immigration and Nationality Act
 - Guidelines for Children's Asylum Claims

- ❖ Attorneys
 - Zealous Advocacy=Best Interests
 - Child's voice
 - Child's story
 - Expanding child's understanding of the proceedings