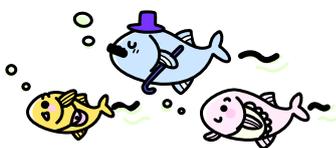


## Visitation or Contact at an Interview Room

After coming back to Japan from Country S with his father, Child Y did not see his mother for three years who stayed behind in Country S. When Child Y turned four years old, he started asking about his mother, saying that he wanted to see her. His father was afraid that if his son met his mother, he might want to go back to Country S, but he also did not want his son to grow up without knowing his mother so he consulted a lawyer, who recommended ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution). Through ADR, the father and the mother were able to reach an agreement under which the mother was allowed to visit Child Y twice a year in Japan.

The father then consulted with a social worker at the International Social Service Japan (ISSJ), and asked the mother to use an interview room at ISSJ and to meet her son in the presence of a social worker. The mother also wished to meet her son in a quiet and safe place so she agreed to the arrangement.

On the day of the arranged visitation, the father brought Child Y to the interview room and agreed to come back to pick him up when the visitation was over. Child Y was seeing his mother for the first time in many years, so he was nervous and shy at first and started to play silently with the toys placed in the interview room. The mother slowly began talking to him using toys and he started to respond. They communicated with each other this way for some time. After a while, Child Y started to relax and began talking directly to his mother. As he was leaving the interview room at the end of the visitation, he asked his mother, "Can I see you next time?" His mother then asked him if he would like to go out next time. The father said that he was somehow relieved to learn how Child Y behaved during the visitation from the social worker who was present in the interview room, and came



to think positively about the mother having visitation or contact with his son.

## Visitation or Contact at a Place outside ISSJ

Child D was brought back to Japan by her father from Country P when she was a year old. After that, she did not see her mother for five years. So the mother filed a petition for conciliation with the Family Court in Japan seeking visitation or contact with her daughter under the Hague Convention Implementation Act. After many complications, the father agreed to the mother's visitation or contact with his daughter as long as it was in the presence of a third person. The mother also wished to have the presence of a third person who could help her communicate with Child D because she could only understand Japanese. Hence, they agreed to arrange visitation through ISSJ.

The agreed-upon visitation was for two days at a city located far from ISSJ. The social worker from ISSJ travelled to the city one day before the visitation and met with Child D to introduce herself and to explain that she would be attending the visitation over the following two days.

On the first day, the social worker met the mother and Child D at a zoo as the child had wished. Since the social worker and the child had already met on the previous day, the child accepted the social worker



without getting nervous. The child held the hand of her mother and started walking into the zoo. The mother communicated with her daughter through the social worker about her thoughts and feelings. The social worker felt that the mother and Child D were developing emotional closeness. On the second day, the mother and the child did jump ropes and played catch in the park as the child had requested.

At the end of the visitation, Child D said to her mother, "Let's play together some other time" but she did not seem to want to leave her mother. When the social worker told her that it was time to leave, Child D hugged the mother and went back home with her aunt who came to pick her up. After this visitation, the social worker received a word from the father saying Child D wanted to see her mother again. Since it is difficult for the mother to come to Japan often, the father and mother are now considering using Online *Mimamori* Contact in the future.

## Online *Mimamori* Contact

Child K was brought back to Japan by her mother from Country T when she was three years old. Following her arrival, she lost all contact with her father who was left behind in Country T. When Child K turned five years old, her father wished to reestablish contact with her and submitted an application to the Central Authority of Country T to realize visitation or contact with his daughter. The Central Authority of Japan (Hague Convention Division, Consular Affairs Bureau, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), upon receiving the application from Country T, contacted Child K's mother. Although Child K's mother did not want to contact the father directly, she agreed to resolve the matter through conciliation at the Family Court.

During conciliation at the Family Court, Child K's father asked for online contact with his daughter since it is difficult for him to make frequent trips to Japan. However, Child K's mother felt uneasy about the father and the child having online contact on their own especially since Child K had had no contact whatsoever with her father for two years. By way of compromise, the father and the mother agreed to seek assistance of ISSJ in using a web conferencing system called "Online *Mimamori* Contact," which enables a parent and his/her child who do not live together to establish online contact with the assistance of and monitoring by a social worker.



On the day of the first online contact arranged by ISSJ, Child K kept staring at her father's face on the screen uneasily because she had not seen him for more than two years and her father also looked nervous. The social worker from ISSJ then asked Child K what she had enjoyed recently. After that, Child K started talking to her father about herself little by little. Following several such meetings through Online *Mimamori* Contact, Child K and her father gradually became comfortable communicating with each other. After seeing how much Child K was looking forward to these contacts with her father, the mother also came to have positive views about their online contact despite the initial anxiety she had about the father's visitation or contact with her daughter.

After a few contacts with Child K through online, the father asked ISSJ if he could send her a birthday present from Country T, but the mother was reluctant to disclose their address to him. ISSJ then suggested that the father send the present through ISSJ and the mother accepted the proposal. The child is now looking forward to receiving a present from her father for her upcoming birthday.