

# FACT SHEET

## TRAVELING WITH MINOR CHILDREN

An international trip with a child under 18 will likely require approval from both parents. The US requires both parents, or legal guardians, to consent for a child to get a passport, so as a single parent traveling with your child under 18 you might need to secure some extra documentation before your trip.

### Permission Letter



Customs and Border Protection recommends that you carry a letter of permission with you if you are traveling with a minor and both biological parents or legal guardians are not present. Ideally the letter should be notarized. CBP staffers can ask to see the letter when you reach the United States border, and if you're unable to show it, you should expect to be delayed while staffers investigate the circumstances of your travel. Border control in the country you're traveling to might also have request documentation. Canada, for example, requires that you present the letter before boarding a flight to the country, and you might be denied boarding if you cannot present it.

### Suggested Wording



Although there is no specific standard wording for the permission letter, CBP suggests that the letter be worded along these lines: "I acknowledge that my spouse is traveling out of the country with my son. She has my permission to do so." CBP also suggests you get the letter notarized to avoid any question of it being forged. It's vital that the document provide contact information for the absent parent so that authorities can touch base with questions.

### Custody Disputes



If you are in a dispute with your spouse over the custody of your minor child, you may not be able to travel internationally without your spouse's permission. However, if you have already been awarded sole custody, your spouse has no legal claim, so you may not require their consent to travel. If this applies to you, you should carry a copy of the court's decree confirming this. Some custody decrees specifically prevent either parent from taking a child outside the United States. If you are in doubt, check the wording carefully.

### Child Abduction



If your spouse has a legal claim on your minor child and you travel internationally with your child without first getting your spouse's permission, you could be considered guilty of child abduction. This is a crime in every U.S. state and in some cases is deemed a federal offense under the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act. The potential seriousness of the offense underlines the need to gain permission before embarking on an international journey with your children.