



Questions and Answers

Feb. 24, 2009

USCIS to Adjudicate Petitions Filed Within the Russian Federation to Classify Orphans as Immediate Relatives

Introduction

Beginning on March 30, 2009, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will assume responsibility from the Department of State for adjudicating any Form I-600, *Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative*, filed within the Russian Federation.

In preparation for this change and to minimize the possibility of any delay while in Russia, USCIS recommends prospective adoptive parents and adoption service providers review the following list of questions and answers.

Questions and Answers

Q. Where do I file Form I-600, *Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative*, after adopting an orphan in Russia?

A. You must file your Form I-600 with the USCIS Moscow Field Office located at the United States (U.S.) Embassy in Moscow at Novinsky Bulvar 19/23. The nearest subway stations are "Barrikadnaya" and "Krasnopresnenskaya." Parking is not readily available.

Q. How can I contact the USCIS Moscow Field Office?

A. The USCIS Moscow Field Office can be reached by:

- **Email:** Please send adoption-related inquiries to moscow.adoptions@dhs.gov. All other inquires should be sent to moscow.dhs@dhs.gov.
- **Phone:** For general inquiries in Russian or English, please call (7-495) 728-5550 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you are calling from the United States, please dial 011 first.
- **Fax:** Please send faxes to (7-495) 728-5083.
- **Walk-in:** The USCIS Moscow Field Office is open for public inquiries only Monday through Friday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Note: The USCIS Moscow Field Office is closed on American and Russian holidays.

Q. What documents must I submit with my Form I-600?

A. When you file Form I-600 in Russia, you will be submitting your documents at one window for two different departments: USCIS and the U.S. Department of State Consular Section. USCIS has authority for adjudicating the I-600 petition, and the Consular Section has authority for issuing the child's immigrant visa after petition has been approved.

You should bring all of the documents listed below, including those required by the U.S. Department of State, to your appointment and be prepared to submit a photocopy (unless otherwise noted). All foreign language documents must be accompanied by a certified English translation. USCIS may at any time require that you submit the original document for review. You do not need to have the photocopies notarized.

1. Form I-600 (Pages: 1, 2) completed, personally signed and dated by the adoptive parent or both parents if married (a power of attorney does not authorize one spouse to sign on behalf of the other spouse for USCIS purposes).
2. The child's Russian passport, with a photocopy of the biographical page.
3. The child's birth certificate (i.e., the one with the birth parents listed) or other evidence of identity and age if a birth certificate is not available.
4. The child's amended birth certificate (i.e., the one which indicates the names of the U.S. citizen adoptive parents).
5. The adoption certificate.
6. The adoption decree issued by the local court.
7. Information regarding the resolution of the birth parents' rights: e.g., death certificates; certificates confirming that the listed parents were not legally registered; letters of relinquishment; court decrees removing parental rights, etc.
8. A letter from the Ministry of Education indicating that the child has spent the required amount of time listed on the Federal Data Bank and has been released for adoption by foreigners.
9. A letter from each orphanage or hospital in which the child has resided. This letter should include the dates of the child's stay in the institution, any information as to whether the child was visited, and a statement of no objection to the adoption by the orphanage.

In addition to the documents listed above, the Department of State Consular Section requires certain documents to process the child's immigrant visa. Please see their Web site <http://moscow.usembassy.gov> for more information and any updates. As noted above, you should submit these documents when you are filing the I-600 petition with USCIS:

1. Passport(s) of adoptive parent(s), with a photocopy of the information page of each passport.
2. The medical form in a sealed envelope from a Panel Physician. See the "Immigrant Visa" section on <http://moscow.usembassy.gov> for a list of eligible physicians and their contact information.
3. Form DS-230 (Pages: 1, 2, 3, 4) - Application for Immigrant Visa. This form should be completed from the perspective of the adopted child. Please do not sign this form until asked to do so by a Consular Officer.
4. Immunization Affidavit.
5. Form I-864, Affidavit of Support, and last 3 years of 1040 tax returns (only required if one of the parents was not presented at the court hearing or if parents reside outside the U.S.). If you are adopting more than one child, you must submit a separate I-864 for each child.
6. Two color photos of the child (5 cm by 5 cm).

Q. Do I need an appointment to file the Form I-600? If so, when are appointments scheduled?

A. Yes, you will need an appointment to file the Form I-600 with the USCIS Moscow Field Office. You should make an appointment for a day when you will have all of the supporting documents to submit with your Form I-600. The time necessary to obtain all required Russian documents varies from case to case, and may range from several days to about two weeks after the final adoption court hearing. Before you make an appointment to file, you should contact your adoption service provider for information about your final court hearing and when you will have all of the required documents to file Form I-600.

Q. How do I schedule an appointment to file my Form I-600?

A. To schedule an appointment to file Form I-600, go to the USCIS "INFOPASS" website at: www.infopass.uscis.gov and click "Make your appointment with INFOPASS." Choose "Russian

Federation” under the list of countries rather than entering a zip code and then select “You would like to file an orphan petition.” This will allow you to select the date and time of your appointment with the USCIS Moscow Field Office.

Appointments will be available from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Monday to Friday (excluding American and Russian holidays) no earlier than two weeks (14 calendar days) before the anticipated filing date. You will be able to schedule an appointment up until the day of the desired filing date, however if the desired date is no longer available you will have to select the next available date. Please bring a printout of your INFOPASS appointment letter and a photo ID with you to your appointment in Moscow.

Q. May my adoption service provider submit the Form I-600 for me?

A. Yes, an adoption service provider may submit the Form I-600 on your behalf, but you must be physically present in Russia on the date the Form I-600 is filed and the INFOPASS appointment must be made in your name.

Note: USCIS may not release information to an adoption service provider regarding your case unless you first provide written permission to do so. You may email or fax your written permission to the USCIS Moscow Field Office or submit it with your Form I-600.

The following is an example of acceptable language to provide such permission*:

<p>Pursuant to the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, and in order to assist USCIS in the adjudication of this Form I-600, I (we), the undersigned petitioner(s) filing this Form I-600, consent to the disclosure of any record pertaining to me (us) which appears in any system of records maintained by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, or which USCIS may obtain as a result of the collection of my (our) biometrics information to the following adoption service provider:</p> <p>Adoption Service Provider: _____ Point of Contact (Contact person within the organization): _____ Address: _____ Telephone Number: _____ Fax Number: _____ E-mail address: _____</p> <p>In-Country Facilitator (in Russia): _____ Point of Contact (Contact person within the organization): _____ Address: _____ Telephone Number: _____ Fax Number: _____ E-mail address: _____</p> <p>I (We) authorize USCIS to provide the adoption service provider and/or in-country facilitator noted above with copies of notices sent to me (us) about this case, and also to discuss all aspects of my (our) case, including the prior Form I-600A proceeding as well as this Form I-600 proceeding.</p> <p>I (We) also understand that an adoption service provider can only provide services, and cannot act as my (our) representative before USCIS with respect to my (our) case unless the adoption service provider is authorized to do so under 8 CFR Part 292.</p>

*Again, this is not a required or an official form, but rather sample language that you can use to provide the necessary consent to disclose information to your adoption service provider.

Q. What is the processing time for the Form I-600?

A. The USCIS Moscow Field Office anticipates completing the processing of most Form I-600 petitions on the date they are filed with our office. Please note that this does not include the visa issuance process by the U.S. Embassy which may take additional time.

The most common situations that could cause a delay in processing (and your intended departure) include:

1. Expiration of the fingerprint clearances for a prospective adoptive parent or any adult household member (18 years old or older).
2. A significant change in the prospective adoptive parent’s household (e.g. change in residence, criminal history, significant decrease in financial resources, and/or the addition of one or more children or other dependents to the family) after submitting a home study with the Form I-600A.
3. The home study submitted with the Form I-600A did not include an approval for the adoption of a child with the range of psychological or medical issues noted in the referred child’s background report, adoption court documents, or medical exam.
4. The home study submitted with the Form I-600A includes an approval for the adoption of an orphan of a certain age or gender, but the adoptive parent files Form I-600 on behalf of an orphan of a different age or gender.

To avoid processing delays, please make sure (prior to departing the U.S.):

- All required fingerprint clearances will be valid through the filing and processing time of Form I-600. (A fingerprint clearance is valid if the fingerprint clearance was processed by USCIS within the last 15 months. You can find this information on your Form I-600A approval notice (Form I-171H or Form I-797C))
- Your Form I-600A approval will not expire before you file Form I-600 in Russia. (Your Form I-600A is valid for 18 months from the date listed on your Form I-600A approval notice (Form I-171H or Form I-797C))
- Your Form I-600A accurately reflects your marital status
- You receive an amended Form I-600A approval notice (Form I-171H or Form I-797C) from the USCIS office that originally approved your Form I-600A if:
 - There have been any significant changes in your household after the original home study was submitted with your I-600A, and/or
 - The orphan you intend to adopt does not match the description in the home study recommendation upon which the approval of Form I-600A was made.
- Your Form I-600A approval indicates Russia, if the home study is country-specific

The following chart explains what to do if a cause for a processing delay applies to you:

If . . .	Then . . .
You, your spouse (if any) or another adult household member’s fingerprint clearance has (or will expire) before or shortly after your appointment to file Form I-600	Immediately contact your local USCIS field office and request an appointment to have the fingerprints retaken before you depart for Russia. USCIS will schedule the fingerprinting appointment at a USCIS Application Support Center.
Your Form I-600A approval will expire before your appointment to file Form I-600	You may request a <i>one-time</i> , no-charge extension of Form I-600A by sending a written request* to the USCIS field office that originally approved your Form I-600A. It must include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language requesting a one-time, no-charge extension of your Form I-600A approval; 2. A copy of your current valid Form I-600A approval notice (Form I-171H or Form I-797C); and 3. An updated home study.

	<p>* USCIS must receive this request before your Form I-600A approval notice expires, but no earlier than 90 days before its expiration.</p>
Your marital status has changed after filing Form I-600A	You must file a new Form I-600A (\$670 fee) with the local USCIS field office with jurisdiction over your place of residence.
<p>There has been a significant change* in your household since your Form I-600A was approved</p> <p>*e.g. a change in residence, criminal history, financial resources, and/or the addition of one or more children or other dependents to the family</p>	<p>You will need to request an amended Form I-600A approval notice (Form I-171H or Form I-797C) from the USCIS field office that originally approved your Form I-600A. The request must include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An amended home study reflecting the significant change; 2. A copy of the original home study; and 3. A copy of the original Form I-600A approval notice.
The home study you submitted did not include a recommendation to adopt a child with special needs or disabilities, but you would like to adopt such a child	You must follow the steps above to request an amended Form I-600A approval notice. In step 1, the amended home study should include a new recommendation to adopt a child with special needs or disabilities.
The home study you submitted included a recommendation to adopt a child of a certain age or gender, but you would like to adopt an orphan of a different age or gender	You must follow the steps above to request an amended Form I-600A approval notice. In step 1, the amended home study should include a new recommendation to adopt a child of a different age or gender. The new recommendation should be as specific as possible regarding the nature of the child's special needs or disabilities for which the home study preparer is approving the parent(s).
You want to adopt a child from Russia but your Form I-600A approval is for another country	<p>You may make <i>one</i>* request for a change of country notification without fee by submitting a written request to the USCIS office that originally approved your Form I-600A. The request must include a copy of your current Form I-600A approval notice (Form I-171H or Form I-797C). An amended home study containing a new recommendation is only required if the original contained a country-specific recommendation.</p> <p>*You must file Form I-824 (\$340 fee) for any additional change of country requests.</p>

Q. How do I know if my Form I-600A extension request and/or any requests to amend my Form I-600A approval notice have been approved?

A. If your Form I-600A extension request is approved, then you will receive an amended Form I-600A approval notice (Form I-171H or Form I-797C) indicating that your Form I-600A has been extended for another 18 months from the expiration date of the original Form I-600A approval. Notice of approval of

the extension request will be forwarded by the USCIS field office to the USCIS Moscow Field Office through the National Visa Center (NVC). Note: If your Form I-600A has expired before requesting such an extension, or your last extension of approval of I-600A has expired, then you must file a new Form I-600A, with fee and supporting documentation, including a valid home study.

Do not travel until the extension of approval or a new I-600A has been approved and the USCIS Moscow Field Office has received official notification of the approval notice.

The USCIS Moscow Field Office will also receive official notification of granted requests to amend Form I-600A approval notices through the NVC. Before traveling to Russia, please ensure that your I-600A approval has been amended and received by USCIS Moscow.

Q. What is an amended home study?

A. An amended home study should be a complete home study reflecting the changed information since the original home study was submitted to USCIS and should reflect a new recommendation in light of those changes. The new information should be included in the body of the new home study and should not be attached as addendum to the original home study. A copy of the original home study should be submitted with the amended version.