



# INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

U.S. Department of State, Office of Children's Issues



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A TO Z

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## **A MESSAGE FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

Adoption is a wonderful way for many orphaned children to find a loving, permanent home. Orphans in both the United States and in countries across the globe deserve families who will love and provide for them. I am proud that Americans respond to this need internationally. Each year our nation welcomes more children into homes through intercountry adoption than any other nation.

The process of adopting a child from another country can be difficult. The regulations and requirements for adopting may seem confusing—and sometimes frustrating. My hope is that we can provide you some answers about these requirements. Through this booklet, learn about key adoption concepts and the basics of adopting. I also encourage you to visit our website [adoption.state.gov](https://adoption.state.gov).

If you are considering adopting, know that if you proceed, you will forever change your life and the life of a child. I applaud the commitment that you are considering. Should you decide to adopt internationally, we are here to help.

Michele Thoren Bond  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Overseas Citizens Services



## **B**EGINNING THE ADOPTION PROCESS

While the process for every intercountry adoption varies from country to country, there is a general process that the majority of intercountry adoptions follow. In part, this is because U.S. law requires that every intercountry adoption follows certain procedures. Most adoptions will include the steps mentioned below.

Selecting your adoption service provider

Gaining approval to adopt


Being matched with a child

Adopting or obtaining legal custody of the child in the foreign country

Applying for a visa for the child to move to the United States

Traveling home with your child

Learn more about country specific processes on our website, [adoption.state.gov](http://adoption.state.gov).



# B





## CHOOSING AN AGENCY

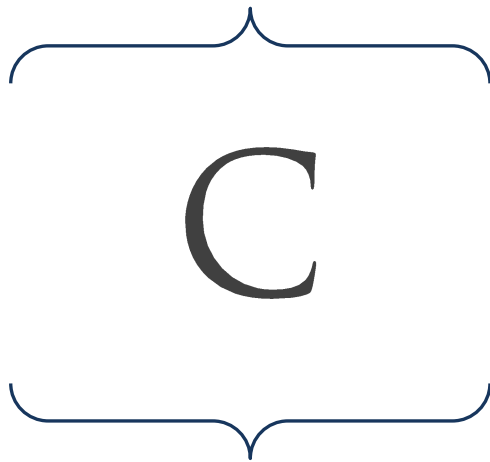
Choosing a qualified adoption service provider for your home study or to assist you in a placement is a very important part of the adoption process. You should do your homework before selecting an agency. We suggest talking to other parents who have adopted. What agency did they choose? Was the agency always helpful? In addition, contact your state's licensing organization to find out what providers are licensed in your area (adoption service providers generally must be licensed by the state in which they operate). Ask if there are any unresolved complaints against an agency. You can also contact your local Better Business Bureau.

If you intend to adopt from a country that is party to the Hague Adoption Convention, you will need to select an adoption service provider that has been accredited. A comprehensive list of accredited agencies, as well as a list of Hague Adoption Convention countries, is available on our website [adoption.state.gov](http://adoption.state.gov).

We suggest meeting with several agencies. Sit down with each of them and find out what services they offer. They should be willing to disclose specific information about their operations and procedures in writing to you. We recommend that you review as much information as possible before you sign a contract with any agency. For example, if you request it, adoption service providers should disclose to you in writing such things as:

- A sample written adoption services contract;
- A proposal of all expected total fees and estimated expenses;
- Its adoption service policies and procedures, including general eligibility criteria and post-placement support;
- A list of people and organizations not directly employed by the agency that would help with your adoption, and the costs of their services; and
- The number of adoption placements per year, and the number of these placements that remain intact.





## CHOOSING AN AGENCY, CONT.

In addition, before you commit to one agency, consider requesting the following:

- A list of families who have adopted through the agency. These families can be a wonderful resource.
- Proof that the agency's state license is current. You can research their license validity through The National Adoption Information Clearinghouse at <http://www.childwelfare.gov/nad/index.cfm>.
- A copy of the agency's refund policy. In case there are changes in your circumstances, or changes in country policies, this is vital information to have.
- Copies of all contracts that will be signed between your family and the agency.
- A list of all the agency's fees and a fee schedule. There could be additional fees not included in the initial list of your estimated expenses.

Once you choose an adoption service provider, you will be expected to sign an adoption services contract with that agency.

**REMEMBER:** Only accredited adoption service providers (organizations or individuals) will be eligible to provide adoption services in adoptions from Hague Convention countries.

## DECIDING WHERE TO ADOPT

Millions of children across the world live without the love and protection of a family. In the United States alone, over 500,000 children live in our foster care system, and approximately 115,000 of them are waiting to be adopted.

With the need so great, deciding where to adopt from can be a difficult decision. Whether the choice is domestic or foreign adoption, in the end it is a deeply personal decision.

When making your decision, research foreign country adoption requirements. Some countries, for example, allow single-parent adoption, while others forbid it. Some countries have age or income requirements for adoptive parents. These requirements can change, sometimes quickly. You can read more about each country's adoption laws on the Country Information section of our website.

Americans do adopt children from many countries spread across the globe. Currently, most adoptions to the United States come from these countries:

China	Liberia
Colombia	Philippines
Ethiopia	Russia
Guatemala	South Korea
Haiti	Taiwan
India	Ukraine
Kazakhstan	Vietnam







# E



## ELIGIBILITY TO ADOPT

Before you can bring a child home from another country, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must determine that you are able to provide a loving, stable home for that child.

The most important requirement for USCIS approval is a *home study* that establishes your ability to care for a child. Every state has different requirements for this home study, but in general all home studies will detail personal, financial, and medical information. They will include items such as personal references, fingerprint clearances, verification of employment, proof of health and life insurance, and sometimes photos of your home and family.

Home studies are typically prepared by a social work professional or organization, though state laws vary. Your adoption service provider should know the requirements of your state, and make sure that your home study satisfies all laws and regulations (including those of the Hague Adoption Convention). If adopting from a Hague Convention country, your home study must be completed by an accredited adoption service provider unless the home study preparer qualifies as an exempted provider. Once your home study is complete, it will be submitted to USCIS.





## FILING YOUR INITIAL APPLICATION

When your home study has been completed, it will be submitted to USCIS with one of two forms:

- Form **I-600A** – *Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition*; or
- Form **I-800A** – *Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country*.

Form I-600A is used for non-Hague Adoption cases, while Form I-800A is used for Hague Adoption cases. Both forms, along with their filing instructions, can be accessed on the website of USCIS, [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

USCIS evaluates your suitability and eligibility to adopt. If your application is approved, it will notify you and the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country from where you have indicated you wish to adopt.

For more information, see [adoption.state.gov](http://adoption.state.gov).





# G



## **G**UIDELINES ON INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

To complete an intercountry adoption abroad and bring a child to the United States, you must fulfill the requirements of three separate governmental authorities:

- The foreign country in which the child resides;
- U.S. federal immigration law; and
- Your state of residence.

Consequently, there are numerous documents required, and the process can be both complex and lengthy. You will need to work on all three sets of requirements at the same time because the requirements may overlap. Do your research and planning first to avoid having to go back and start again.

These requirements serve not only to protect the child, but also the birth parents and the adoptive parents. You may want to procure several originals or certified copies of each document in the event they are needed to meet the requirements of the foreign country, U.S. federal government agencies, or your home state.



## HAGUE ADOPTION CONVENTION

The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) is an international agreement to safeguard intercountry adoptions. Concluded on May 29, 1993 in The Hague, the Netherlands, the Convention establishes international standards of practices for intercountry adoptions. The United States signed the Convention in 1994, and the Convention entered into force for the United States in April 2008. If you adopt from a country that is party to the Convention (Convention countries), your adoption has additional protections as well as some added requirements.

One of the most important protections is that your adoption agency or service provider must be accredited to conduct intercountry adoptions. The standards for accreditation ensure that your agency is qualified to provide services.

The Department of State has designated two accrediting entities to perform the accreditation functions: (1) the Council on Accreditation and (2) the Colorado Department of Human Services.

An important new Convention requirement for you is that adoptive parents must participate in at least ten hours of pre-adoption training before traveling overseas to complete an adoption. Under the Convention, there is greater transparency in the adoption process, including written procedures on fees and transmission of medical records for the child.



## HAGUE ADOPTION CONVENTION, CONT.

More than 75 other countries have joined this very important treaty. These countries have demonstrated their commitment to strong international protections for children, birth parents, and adoptive parents in the intercountry adoption process.

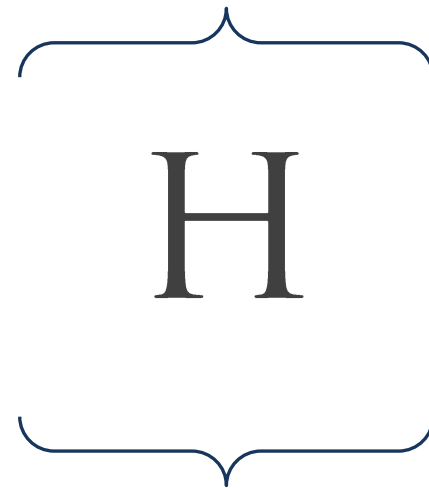
The principles of the Convention include:

- Ensuring that intercountry adoptions take place in the best interests of children;
- Preventing the abduction, exploitation, sale, or trafficking of children; and
- Facilitating communication between Central Authorities in countries of origin and destination countries.

Comprehensive information concerning the Hague Adoption Convention and member states is located on [adoption.state.gov](https://adoption.state.gov).

*“The child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding...Intercountry adoption may offer the advantage of a permanent family to a child for whom a suitable family cannot be found in his or her State of origin.”*

**-Hague Adoption Convention, Preamble**





## I-600 or I-800 FORM

To adopt a child overseas and bring that child back to the United States, the child must be found eligible to be adopted under U.S. law. Because adoption laws vary from country to country, it is possible to adopt a child abroad who does not qualify to immigrate to the United States. That is why a child must also be found eligible to be adopted under U.S. law. It allows the child to move with you to the United States.

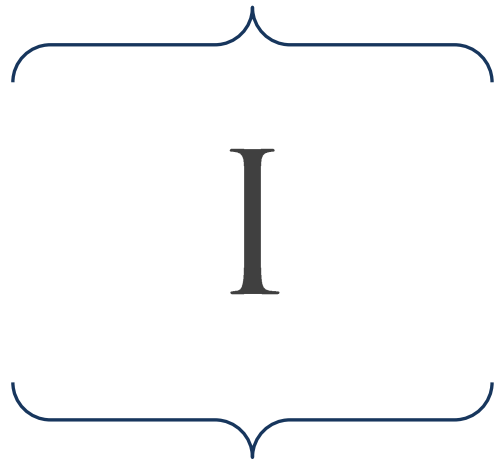
The federal agency responsible for determining whether a child is eligible to immigrate to the United States is U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS' rules for the eligibility of an adopted child to immigrate to the United States differ for children living in Hague Adoption Convention countries and those living in non-Convention countries. Children in Convention countries must meet the definition of a *Convention adoptee*; children in countries non-Convention countries must meet the U.S. definition of an *orphan*.

To apply to USCIS for a determination of whether a child is eligible to immigrate to the United States, you will use one of two forms:

- Form **I-600**, the *Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative*, or
- Form **I-800**, *Petition to Classify Convention Adoptee as an Immediate Relative*

Form I-600 is used for non-Hague Adoption cases, while the Form I-800 is used for Hague Adoption cases.





## I-600 or I-800 FORM, CONT.

Filing either Form I-600 or I-800 tells USCIS that you have identified a specific child to adopt and request authorization for that child to come to the United States. Both forms, along with their filing instructions, can be accessed on the website of USCIS, [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov).

Form I-600, along with its supporting documents, are required for USCIS to determine that a child is eligible for classification as an orphan. If you have not submitted Form I-600A first, you will also need to establish your eligibility to adopt with USCIS.

Form I-800, along with its supporting documents, are required for USCIS to determine that a child is eligible for classification as a Convention adoptee. In order to file Form I-800 with USCIS, you must have an approved, valid Form I-800A.

**Keep in mind:** In addition to qualifying under U.S. immigration law, a child must qualify for adoption under the laws of his or her country of origin in order to be adopted. Each country has different requirements for children to be eligible for adoption. The Country Information on our website provides more details for specific countries.

For more information, see [adoption.state.gov](http://adoption.state.gov).

## JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

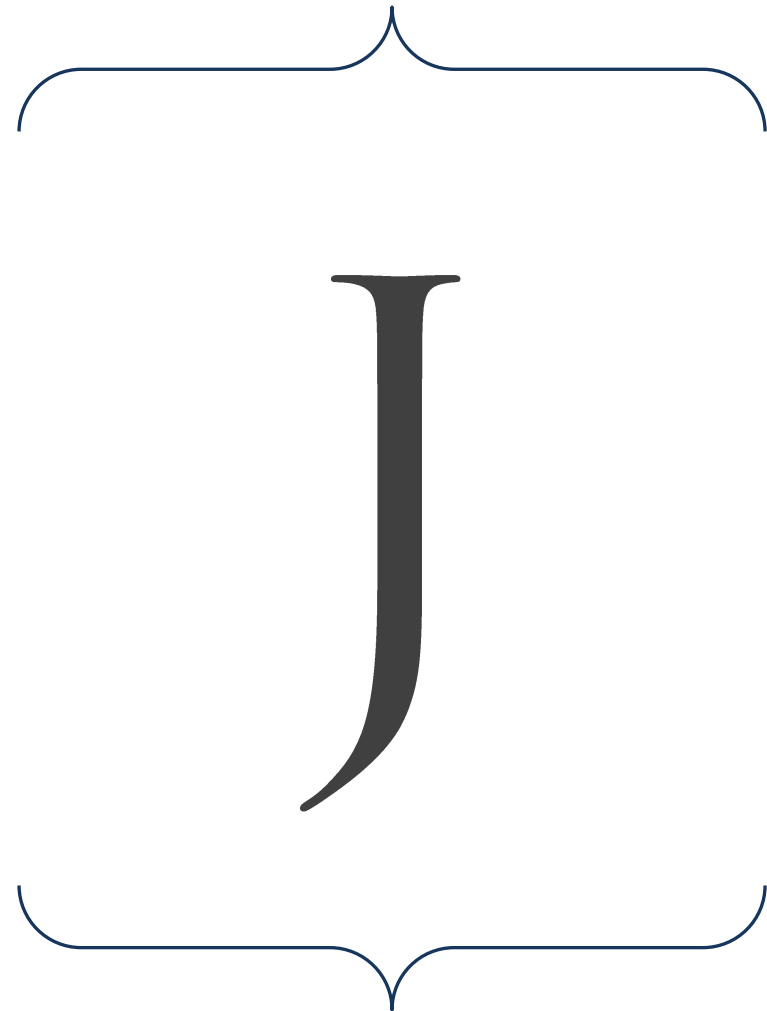
Adoption procedures vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country. In most countries, a child must first be legally recognized as eligible to be adopted internationally before any adoption or custody proceedings take place. If a birth parent is still living, the child must be legally and irrevocably released for adoption in a procedure provided for under local law.

Questions about specific foreign laws should be addressed to your adoption service provider or an attorney operating in the country where the adoption will take place. Our website [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov) contains lists of some attorneys in foreign countries.

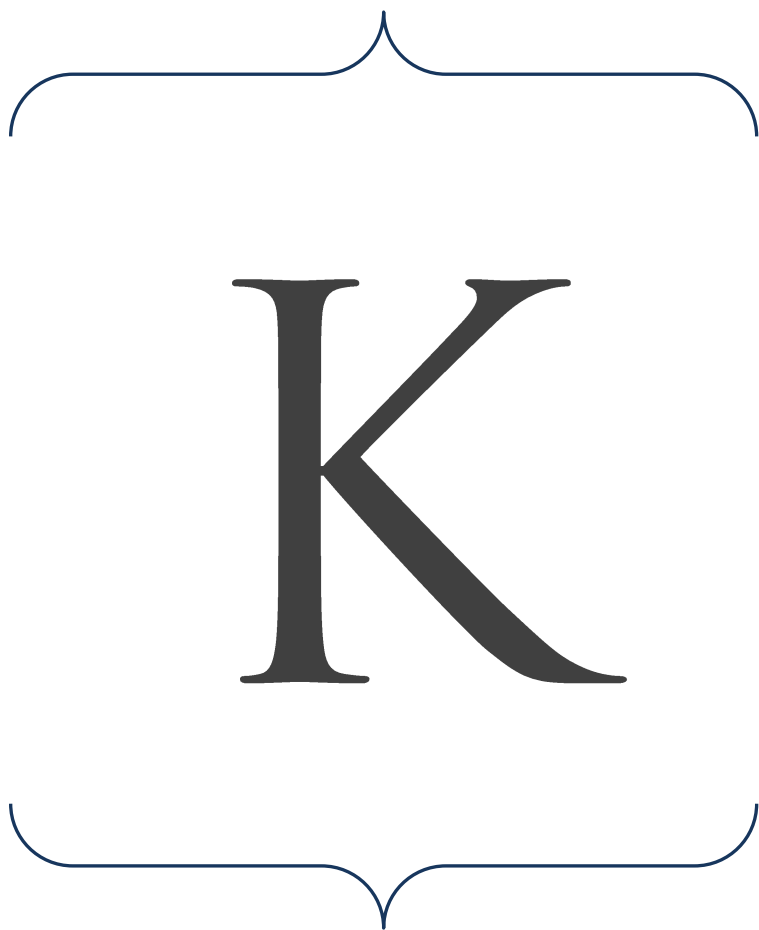
It is important to note that a country's determination of the child as an orphan or Convention adoptee does not guarantee that the child will be considered an orphan or Convention adoptee under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act. Foreign countries may have different legal standards.

Some countries accept an authenticated U.S. home study of the prospective adoptive parents; other countries require adoptive parents to travel and be evaluated in-country. Countries may require a period of residence by one or both adoptive parents. You may find it necessary to spend an extended period in the foreign country awaiting the completion of the local adoption documents. Additionally, several countries require a post-adoption follow-up conducted by the adoption agency or the foreign country's consul in the United States.

**Note:** *The Country Information on our website provides more details for specific countries.*







## **K**EEPING BALANCE IN THE PROCESS

The intercountry adoption process can be long and trying. It can also be complicated and expensive. During the process, you'll need to make many decisions, some minor and some potentially life-changing. Clarifying your hopes and goals early on can make those decisions easier. Maintaining balance and perspective can be key when the process takes unexpected turns.

It's important to start strong by learning as much as you can, seeking sound advice, and maintaining a good support system. Consider speaking with a licensed professional counselor, therapist, social worker, or a member of the clergy about any questions or anxieties you may be having about becoming an adoptive parent.

Mid-term, flexibility may be necessary. For example, many prospective adoptive parents begin the process by assuming that they want as young a child as possible, and a child that closely matches their family's ethnic or historical roots. They may learn that there are older or multi-ethnic children are eligible for adoption, rather than infants. Will that work for you? While trying to follow the advice of close friends who successfully navigated a foreign adoption, you may learn that a country's laws have changed or an agency is under new leadership. Some legal complexity may threaten to undo months or even years of planning, or require additional months of waiting. Is it time to shift directions?

Long-term, it is probably patience that will help carry you through this sometimes arduous process. After you've done all your homework, just being patient may be the only thing you can do.



## LEGAL CUSTODY ABROAD

Some countries do not allow full and final adoptions. Instead, adopting parents are granted guardianship, which permits the child to leave his/her country of origin. Final adoption occurs under the laws of the adopting parents' state of residence.

If you gain legal custody of a child abroad (as opposed to full adoption), the child may be eligible to immigrate to the United States using an IH-4 or IR-4 immigrant visa. The IH-4 immigrant visa is issued to children from Hague Convention countries immigrating to the United States for adoption. The IR-4 immigrant visa is issued to children from non-Convention countries.

Once back in the United States, it is important to finalize the adoption as soon as possible so that your child is eligible for U.S. citizenship. Not completing the adoption and the requirements for U.S. citizenship can negatively impact many areas of his/her future life including family travel, eligibility for education scholarships and grants, employment, and voting.

Learn more on [adoption.state.gov](https://adoption.state.gov).





## **M**ISSION – U.S. EMBASSY OR CONSULATE ROLE

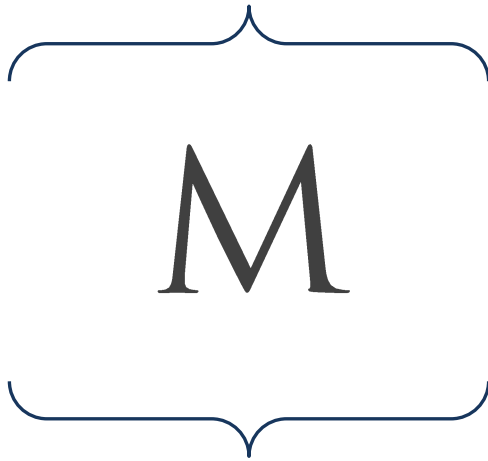
### **Role of the Consular Officer**

Consular Officers represent America to the world as they assist U.S. Citizens travel, conduct business, and live abroad. One of the most important missions of a Consular Officer is the protection of American citizens abroad. Consular Officers also help foreign citizens who want to travel to the United States. They conduct interviews and determine whether or not someone is eligible for a visa to travel or immigrate to the United States.

Daily, Consular Officers address a variety of issues, such as crisis situations within the country, lost passports, international child abduction, arrests, and medical emergencies. Additionally, Consular Officers monitor general country travel conditions and can provide disaster assistance. They may provide very general information about the local adoption process, but they are not experts on local laws, nor can they provide guidance on private legal matters (such as an adoption). For legal services, you must consult professional legal counsel.

### **The Visa Interview**

When a foreign adoption or guardianship is granted, adoptive parent(s) apply for an immigrant visa at a U.S. consulate or Embassy abroad. Generally an IR-3 or an IH-3 visa is for a child adopted abroad; an IR-4 or IH-4 visa is for a child to be adopted in the United States.



## **M**ISSION – U.S. EMBASSY OR CONSULATE ROLE, CONT.

The consular section at the embassy can schedule the visa interview when all required documentation has been received and your file is complete (see letter N for a list of necessary documents). The Consular Officer has a responsibility to:

- Review the I-600 (non-Hague) or I-800 (Hague) petition;
- Verify the child meets the U.S. definition of an orphan (non-Hague) or Convention adoptee (Hague);
- Establish that the adoptive parent(s) have legal custody;
- Check the visa medical report to see if the child has any medical conditions that might prevent him/her from traveling to the United States; and
- Confirm that the child has the required travel documentation, such as a passport from the foreign country.

Legal custody and proper documentation must be resolved according to the laws of the country of the child's nationality or residence. Requirements vary from country to country so do your homework once you choose a country. Although the consular section can provide basic information on local requirements, you and your adoption service provider are responsible for meeting these requirements.

**Remember:** The child's ability to qualify for an immigrant visa is determined by U.S. law. A foreign adoption or custody decree does not automatically qualify a child for an immigrant visa for entry into the United States.

## **N**CESSARY DOCUMENTS FOR THE VISA INTERVIEW

The consular section will schedule the visa interview once all the required documents have been provided and the file is complete. You should double-check the required documents with the consular section prior to scheduling the interview to avoid any delays.

This documentation includes:

- Proof of your U.S. Citizenship (your passport)
- Marriage Certificate / Divorce and/or death certificate
- Verification of a favorably recommended home study
- Notification by USCIS of I-600A or I-800A approval
- Final adoption decree or official proof of custody from the country-of-origin
- The child's birth certificate
- The child's passport (from the child's country of origin)
- The completed and signed medical examination report
- Police, military, or prison records, if required
- Three (3) frontal photographs of the child's face
- The visa application (Form DS-230, Parts I and II)
- Completed I-600 petition (if it was not previously approved by USCIS) or I-800 petition.

**Note:** *Some documents submitted to the Consular section must also be included in the immigrant visa packet and will not be returned. Adopting parents should obtain extra originals or certified copies of the adoption decree and the child's new birth certificate.*





## ORPHAN / CONVENTION ADOPTEE STATUS

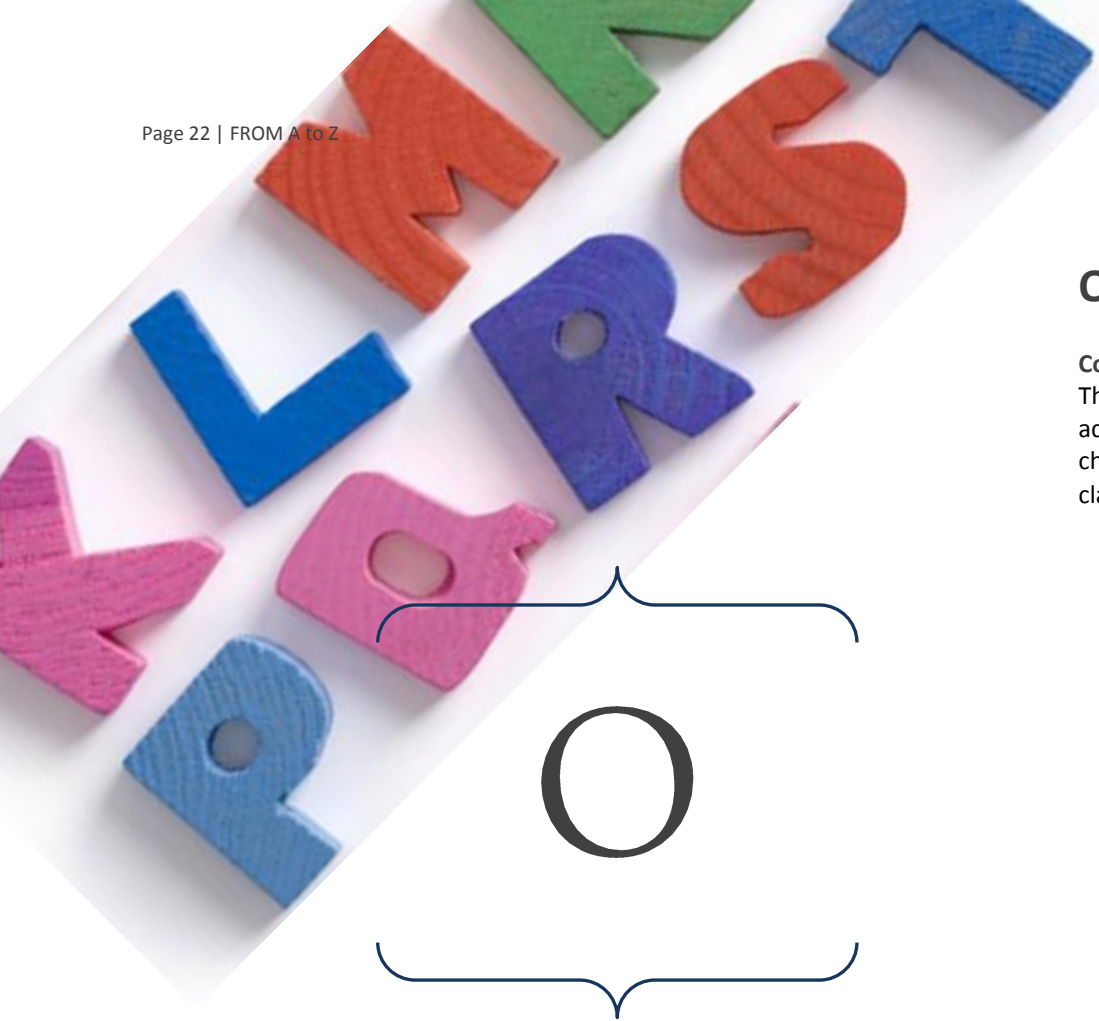
An adoptive child from another country needs a visa to come to the United States. *We keep saying it, but keep in mind that it IS possible in some countries to adopt a child who may NOT qualify for a visa.*

To receive a visa, children in non-Hague Convention countries must meet the U.S. definition of an *orphan*; children in Convention countries must meet the definition of a *Convention adoptee*.

### Orphan

In addition to other applicable requirements, all of the following must be true for a child from a non-Convention country to be eligible for *orphan classification* (as defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)):

- The child must have no parents, or the child has a sole or surviving parent who is unable to care for the child and has, in writing, irrevocably released the child for emigration and adoption.
- The child must be under the age of 16 at the time an I-600 Petition is filed on his or her behalf with the USCIS or with a Consular Officer (a child adopted at age 16 or 17 will also qualify, provided he or she is a birth sibling of a child adopted, or who will be adopted, under the age of 16 by the same adopting parents).
- The adopting parents must have completed a full and final adoption of the child or must have legal custody of the child for purposes of emigration and adoption in the U.S.; and
- The child has been or will be adopted by a married U.S. citizen and spouse jointly, or by an unmarried U.S. citizen at least 25 years of age, with the intent of forming a bona fide parent/child relationship.



## ORPHAN / CONVENTION ADOPTEE STATUS, CONT.

### Convention Adoptee

There are 5 primary elements to the *Convention adoptee* classification. In addition to other applicable requirements, all of the following must be true for a child from a Convention country to be eligible for the Convention adoptee classification:

1. The child is under the age of 16 at the time the I-800 is filed on his or her behalf (taking into account special rules on filing dates for children aged 15-16), is unmarried, and lives in a Convention country;
2. The child will be adopted by a married U.S. citizen and spouse jointly, or by an unmarried U.S. citizen at least 25 years of age, habitually resident in the United States, whom USCIS has found suitable and eligible to adopt (form I-800A approval) with the intent of creating a legal parent-child relationship.
3. The child's birth parent(s), or other legal custodian, individuals, or entities whose consent is necessary for adoption, freely gave their written, irrevocable consent to the termination of their legal relationship with the child and to the child's emigration and adoption;
4. The child has two living birthparents who were the last legal custodian, who signed the irrevocable consent to adoption, and were determined to be incapable of providing proper care for the child; and
5. The child has been adopted or will be adopted in the United States or in the Convention country according to the rules and procedures of the Hague Convention and the Intercountry Adoption Act.



## **P**ROCESSING YOUR CHILD'S VISA

Although the visa interview appears to involve a single action that may be quickly completed, the Consular Officer performs several different steps required by U.S. law and regulation. The Consular Officer:

- Reviews the approved I-600 or I-800 petition to ensure that the child has satisfied the requirements of an orphan or Convention Adoptee as defined by U.S. law;
- Verifies that a competent foreign authority has fully and irrevocably terminated the birth parents' rights or granted appropriate permissions so the child can be adopted;
- Determines that the child's medical condition, as reported by the panel physician, or other factors do not preclude visa issuance;
- Establishes that the adoptive parents have legal custody (Some adoption guardianship decrees, such as the ones practiced under Islamic Family Law, may not meet the requirements of U.S. immigration law);
- Confirms that the child has the required travel documentation such as birth certificate and passport; and
- Conducts the required security checks.



## PROCESSING YOUR CHILD'S VISA, CONT.

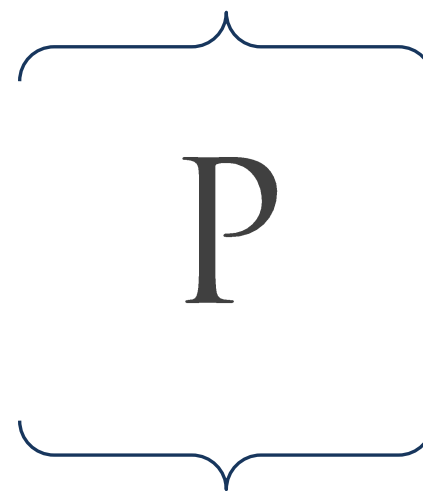
### Different Visa Categories

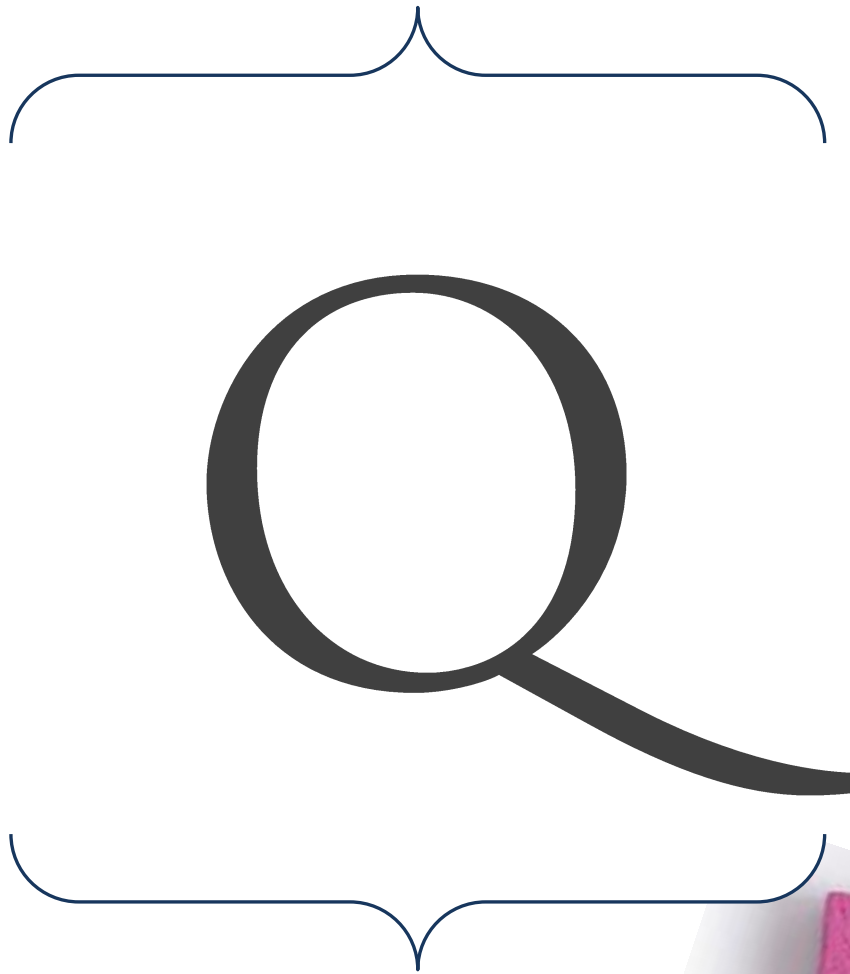
In most cases, adoptive parents seek one of two types of visas for their child:

- **IR-3 or IH-3 visa** is for a child fully adopted overseas (IR-3 in non-Hague countries; IH-3 in Hague countries).
- **IR-4 or IH-4 visa** is for a child who has not been fully adopted, or if the adoptive parent(s) did not see the child before the adoption's finalization (IR-4 in non-Hague countries; IH-4 in Hague countries).

Most children who enter the United States on an IR-4 or IH-4 immigrant visa must be re-adopted after they enter the United States. Some states have no provision for re-adopting children who were fully adopted abroad but who received IR-4 or IH-4 visas because both adoptive parents had not seen the child before the immigrant visa was issued. Adoptive parents should determine in advance the requirements of their own particular state of residence. This information is available through the Federal *Child Welfare Information Gateway* ([www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)), your state's social services agency, or many adoption practitioners.

Special rules apply for children who were adopted in a foreign country and have already lived for two years with their adoptive parents. If you think your child may qualify, you should consult with the nearest Embassy or consulate.





## QUESTIONS ABOUT FRAUD

Adoption fraud not only violates U.S. and other countries' laws, it often ends up hurting the very people adoption is meant to help – the children. Most people involved in the intercountry adoption process have the child's best interests at heart. Unfortunately, there are also a few unscrupulous individuals who prey upon unsuspecting and vulnerable parents. Such individuals may view the adoption process as a way to make money or they may be trying to "beat the system" because they think they know better. Be careful about listening to individuals who claim to know shortcuts. When considering an intercountry adoption, the old adage often applies: If the offer sounds "too good to be true," it probably is.

You can help avoid potential heartache by remaining on the alert and being aware through the entire adoption process. Some common fraud issues include:

- Prospective adoptive parents being charged exorbitant fees or asked to pay large amounts of cash for unspecified services;
- Agencies knowingly offering a supposedly healthy child who is later found to be seriously ill; and
- Agencies knowingly obtaining prepayment for the adoption of a nonexistent child or a child not eligible for adoption.





## QUESTIONS ABOUT FRAUD, CONT.

To help avoid fraud, we recommend:

- Use only reputable agencies, attorneys, and facilitators;
- Be wary of statements from agencies that appear to be contradictory, vague, or unrealistic;
- Report problems with agencies or intermediaries in the United States immediately to the appropriate state authorities, as well as the State Department (other authorities include state social services, District Attorney, Better Business Bureau, or the state Attorney General's office);
- Consider having the child examined by an independent physician before completing adoption procedures (the visa-related medical examination determines whether the child has any conditions that would make him/her ineligible for a U.S. immigrant visa; it is NOT a comprehensive medical assessment of the child); and
- *When possible, deal only with licensed or accredited adoption agencies or service providers.*

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, you should register your concerns with your state licensing authority and with the Better Business Bureau. In addition, you may register your complaint with the Office of Children's Issues by sending an e-mail to [AskCI@State.gov](mailto:AskCI@State.gov). If the fraud or misrepresentation occurs with an agency accredited to work on Hague cases, report it using the **Hague Complaint Registry** on our website.

## **R**OLE OF THE OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S ISSUES

The Office of Children's Issues is part of the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs, and comes under the Directorate of Overseas Citizens Services. It was established in 1994.

The Office of Children's Issues serves as the U.S. Central Authority for the Hague Adoption Convention. We work closely with U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad, other U.S. state, federal and local agencies, and foreign governments. On a daily basis, we strive to:

- Provide current information about adoption procedures in foreign countries;
- Communicate with U.S. consular sections abroad to resolve problems regarding adoption processing;
- Coordinate with agencies and adoption organizations on ways to improve the intercountry adoption;
- Monitor complaints against accredited adoption service providers; and
- Work to ensure that foreign authorities or courts do not discriminate against prospective adoptive parents on the basis of their U.S. citizenship.

The Department of State is committed to working with other governments to establish and maintain transparent laws, procedures and safeguards that protect all parties involved in the intercountry adoption process.





## SUPPORT GROUPS

There are inherent financial and emotional risks associated with every adoption. We encourage you and your adoption service provider to discuss these openly and candidly. You may also find it beneficial to consult with other parents or support groups about the risks and concerns associated with adoption. Although we do not endorse or recommend any particular group, here are some places to start your support group search:

### Support Groups

Adoption Services Support Groups for Adopting Persons:

[www.adoptionservices.org/adoption/adoption\\_support\\_groups.htm](http://www.adoptionservices.org/adoption/adoption_support_groups.htm)

Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoption (FRUA): [www.frua.org](http://www.frua.org)

Families with Children from China: <http://fwcc.org>

Guatemala Adoptive Families Network: [www.guatefam.org](http://www.guatefam.org)

North American Council on Adoptable Children: [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org)

Our Chinese Daughters Foundation (OCDF): [www.ocdf.org](http://www.ocdf.org)



## T RAVEL CONSIDERATIONS

For many adopted children, the trip to their new home can be the longest trip the child has ever experienced in his or her life. As an adoptive parent, this trip will be one of the most important trips you will ever make as well. Avoid any surprises by planning ahead. We encourage you to read the Country Specific Information at [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) and register your travel online.

Find out what the weather conditions are for your destination, and pack accordingly. Also, be aware of local dress codes—it's a good idea to dress simply and conservatively (no shorts or sleeveless shirts). You may want to include at least one business attire outfit for when you are meeting with local officials or conducting business at the U.S. Embassy.

The last thing you want to be concerned about when picking up your child is whether you're leaving something of value behind. Many toiletries and amenities such as a hair dryer, towels, or soap may already be available at your hotel. Call ahead, to find out for sure. Additionally, try to leave extra room in your luggage for your child's belongings. These familiar objects will help your child with the transition of living in a new country.





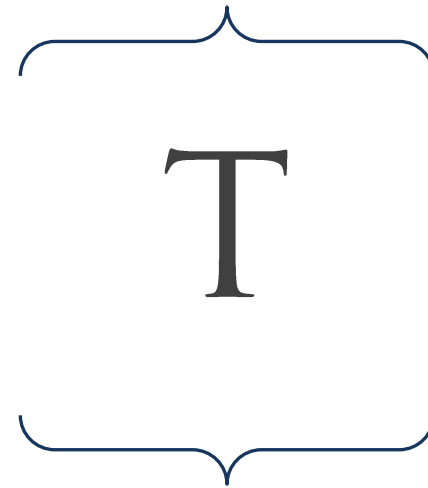
## T RAVEL CONSIDERATIONS, CONT.

While abroad, your personal purchases may not be the only thing you need money for. Some countries will require you to wire the money for the adoption fees ahead of time, while others may require payments in local currency. Believe it or not, some countries may even prefer that the cash is unwrinkled, unmarked, and has no folds. You'll need to plan ahead and be sure you and your valuables can travel safely.

Infants tend to require a lot more gear than older children. They'll need: formula, bottles, various nipples to see which one the baby latches onto the best, diapers, a pacifier, burp cloth, blanket, clothing, and possibly a stroller or baby carrier to make navigating through the airports easier. You may be able to purchase many of these items while overseas, but you may also need to bring some of them with you. If you'll be driving in a car at any point during your trip, have a car seat ready (you may also need a car seat for the trip home, depending on your airline requirements). A first aid kit, diaper rash cream, baby pain reliever, and teething gel may also prove to be useful.

For older children, consider packing a few books, games, toys, and simple snacks to help keep your child occupied during the long trip. Don't forget to bring a couple of outfits (including shoes) that are appropriate for the weather back home for your new son or daughter.

Many adoptive parents decide to give gifts to those who have cared for their child and helped with the adoption. Cash as a gift is usually frowned upon since it can give the impression of a bribe or payment for special favors.





## U.S. CITIZENSHIP FOR AN ADOPTED CHILD

It's very important that you make sure your adopted child becomes a U.S. citizen. **The Child Citizenship Act of 2000** was designed to make the citizenship acquisition process easier and eliminate extra steps and costs. Under the Child Citizenship Act, children adopted abroad can automatically acquire U.S. citizenship if:

- At least one parent of the child is a U.S. citizen;
- The child is under the age of 18;
- The child is admitted to the United States as an immigrant for lawful permanent residence; and
- The adoption is final.

Because of the Child Citizenship Act, many parents are no longer required to make a separate application for their children to be naturalized.

If your adoption doesn't meet these requirements, however, acquiring citizenship for your child will require an additional process and additional fees. If you postpone or even forget to file for your child's naturalization, your child may have difficulty getting college scholarships, working legally, voting, et cetera. In some cases, your child might actually be subject to possible deportation. Make plans right away to protect your child's future.



## VISA QUESTIONS

Let's face it. The immigrant visa process can be complicated. That's why it is important to know that you are not on your own during the process.

Your agency or an immigration attorney can help you. The State Department also has an office for public inquiries about obtaining an immigrant visa. Consider them your first point of contact if you have a question about applying for a child's immigrant visa.

### **Contacting Visa Services**

When making a visa inquiry, the Visa Office's **Public Inquiries Division** prefers that you contact them by telephone or e-mail. Remember that information about a specific visa applicant can only be provided to third parties in certain circumstances. Before calling with a visa inquiry, they request that you first carefully review the visa section on [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov) and also the Embassy Consular Website abroad.

Tel: 202-663-1225

E-mail: [usvisa@state.gov](mailto:usvisa@state.gov)





## WEBSITES AND USEFUL LINKS

### U.S. Government

- U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Office of Children’s Issues: [adoption.state.gov](https://adoption.state.gov)
- U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs: [travel.state.gov](https://travel.state.gov)
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: [www.uscis.gov](https://www.uscis.gov)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare information Gateway: [www.childwelfare.gov](https://www.childwelfare.gov)

### Other Helpful Links

- Adoptive Families Magazine: [www.adoptivefamilies.com](https://www.adoptivefamilies.com)
- Adoptive Parents Committee: [adoptiveparents.org](https://adoptiveparents.org)
- The Center for Adoption Support and Education: [www.adoptionssupport.org](https://www.adoptionssupport.org)
- International Social Service – United States of America Branch, Inc.: [www.iss-usa.org](https://www.iss-usa.org)
- Joint Council on International Children’s Services (JCICS): [www.jcics.org](https://www.jcics.org)
- National Council for Adoption (NCF): [www.adoptioncouncil.org](https://www.adoptioncouncil.org)
- North American Council on Adoptable Children (NACAC): [www.ncac.org](https://www.ncac.org)



## EXTRA SUPPORT WHEN TRAVELING ABROAD

### Staying Safe on Your Trip

Before you travel to abroad, it's always a good practice to investigate the local conditions, laws, political landscape, and culture of the country. And the State Department is a good place to start.

The Department of State provides *Country Specific Information* for every country of the world about various issues, including the health conditions, crime, unusual currency or entry requirements, and any areas of instability. See more on [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

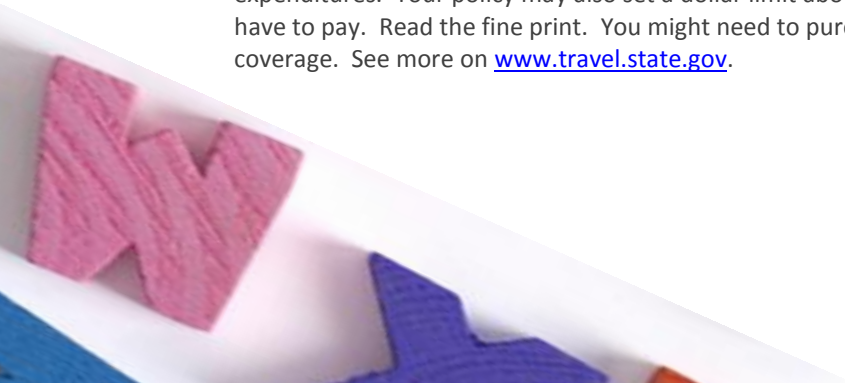
### Staying in Touch on Your Trip

When traveling during the adoption process, we encourage you to register your trip with the Department of State. Travel registration makes it possible to contact you if necessary. Whether there's a family emergency in the United States, or a crisis in the country to which you're traveling, registration assists the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in reaching you.

Registration is free and can be done at [www.travelregistration.state.gov](http://www.travelregistration.state.gov).

### Medical Insurance

Find out if you are covered for a medical emergency overseas BEFORE you leave. Many foreign doctors and hospitals do not accept American insurance policies, and may require full cash payment in advance of your treatment. Your existing medical insurance company may require you to call back to the U.S. for advance approval of any treatments or expenditures. Your policy may also set a dollar limit above which you'll have to pay. Read the fine print. You might need to purchase additional coverage. See more on [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).





## **Y**OUR POST-ADOPTION REPORTING

Just as with many domestic adoptions, some countries require foreign adoptive parents to report on the health and welfare of children they have adopted. These reports are generally referred to as “post-adoption reports” or “post-placement reports”. The requirements of these reports vary from country to country, and for some countries they must be prepared by a social worker. Be sure you understand a country’s reporting requirements. Your adoption agency or the U.S. Embassy often have helpful information about post-adoption reporting requirements.

Post-adoption or post-placement reports are designed to track the child's development and progress in adjusting to a new family and life in a new country. They also provide assurance to officials in the country of origin that children, for whom they may have a legal responsibility, are receiving appropriate care and protection. For you, the reports can serve as useful opportunity to confirm your son or daughter’s adjustment and development.

When a country requires post-adoption or post-placement reports, it is important for adoptive parents to fulfill that obligation. The failure to submit these reports has had a negative impact on other Americans seeking to adopt. You should carefully consider the obligations to provide post-adoption or post-placement reports before pursuing adoption from countries that require such reporting.



## IN THE PARENTING **Z**ONE

Transitions are always a challenge. Imagine the challenges for children who, in a few days or months, find themselves separated from everything that was normal, and living in a new country with unfamiliar customs, food, and language. It can be overwhelming.

In the first few days, you'll probably want to focus quality time on getting to know your child and establishing a home culture that will restore stability in your child's life. It may be good to take your time when introducing your child to family, friends, and your community. You have many years ahead of you to explore the world together.

You know that every child is different. You know too that each stage of life, from infant to adolescence, brings its own challenges. Hopefully, whether this is your first or your fifth child, you've attended classes and sessions about parenting.

Don't be afraid to ask for help when needed. Take advantage of all the resources available to your family -- whether it's another adoptive family, a support group, an advocacy organization, or your religious or community services -- to help ease these transitions. Providing a secure, loving home may be the best challenge you ever have.

