

Adoption Hope International, Inc.



International Adoption Programs

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INTRODUCTION

Adoption Hope International has close working relationships with a team of professional agents abroad that are reputable, honest, efficient and highly committed to their placement programs. They work with reliable orphanages to provide loving attention to the children in their care. When adoptive parents travel in their child's country of origin, they are escorted to all adoption-related activities by the people working in country to assure a successful adoption. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that the adoption process remains on track, and that the traveling families are kept informed and safe at all times.

The landscape of international adoption changes from year to year. Adoption Hope International currently has programs in Estonia, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Russia. The availability of children and the regulations regarding adoption frequently change in each country so the information in our booklet cannot always be the most current. Our staff is in almost daily contact with our in-country representatives and will keep you informed of significant changes. You can always switch countries if circumstances in the country or your desire changes. Our staff is available to guide you in making that decision.

- . The timeframes for the adoption process, travel arrangements, dossier requirements are all determined by the laws and regulations in a particular country or region. Adoption Hope International has no control over these regulations. No medical or social information available to Adoption Hope International is ever withheld from prospective adoptive parents. However, we cannot guarantee the accuracy or the completeness of the information. We also recommend that you have any information evaluated by an International Adoption Doctor.

The timetable for an international adoption varies as much as the procedures themselves. Estimated schedules pertaining to each country are provided in the sections that follow. Please be aware that these time frames are subject to change for reasons beyond our control. Some situations that may prolong the process include but are not limited to: changes in regulations without prior warning, the courts closing for local holidays, or the birth mother residing in a town that requires lengthy in-country travel by foreign attorneys to obtain needed signatures on documents. Each country determines its own procedures and these may differ greatly from standard practice in the United States. Therefore, it is important to remain flexible and to not be alarmed by minor delays.

Regardless of the country or region selected, Adoption Hope International is fully equipped to provide the knowledge and support needed to bring waiting children and adoptive families together through our international programs.

ABOUT OUR AGENCY

Adoption Hope International has their Hague Accreditation.

Adoption Hope International, Inc is a non-profit agency based in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. It has received full Hague Accreditation. The agency was founded by adoptive parents who wanted others to share their adoption journey and experiences with others. Barbara and Diana became a team helping form families through adoption. Gradually, what started as a volunteer effort turned into a profession as they formed relationships with licensed agencies. In 2003, they decided to form their own agency and Adoption Hope International, Inc. was born.

Adoption Hope International, Inc has long standing relationships with professionals who are dedicated to finding loving homes for orphaned children. These professionals are natives of the countries in which they work and are therefore familiar with the language and the customs of the country. They are responsible for identifying children available for adoption, keeping Adoption Hope International, Inc informed about changes in practices and regulations, translating documents, and filing the documents in court. After an adoption is finalized, Adoption Hope International's representatives prepare the paperwork to be presented at the American Embassy so that the child can enter the United States.

When Adoption Hope International, Inc clients arrive in the country, a representative picks them up at the airport and transports them to their pre-arranged accommodations. The team escorts clients to all adoption related activities and provides translation services. Tour guide services can be arranged in many cities. A member of the team is always available by telephone if adoptive parents have questions and concerns.

Adoption Hope International's services continue after your return home with your child. You will receive information about helping your child start life as a United States citizen, including instructions on obtaining a Social Security card and an American birth certificate. Agency staff is available for suggestions, advice, and referrals to resources in your community. Barbara and Diana enjoy keeping in touch with the families that they have helped to create. One of their greatest joys is receiving pictures and letters about the children.

There are many children who do not understand the meaning of the words "mom" and "dad." Adoption Hope International is looking for loving, responsible adults who are ready to share their hearts and homes with children whose birth families cannot care for them.

We look forward to the opportunity to assist you in creating or enlarging your family through adoption.

Adoption Hope International MISSION STATEMENT

We, at Adoption Hope International believe that every child regardless of age, special needs or nationality deserve a loving home and family. Our mission is to find adoptive families for those children whose birth parents cannot take care of them.

What's Involved in International Adoption?

Step by Step Process

1.

Application:

This is the first step in your adoption process. Complete and return the agency's application with the \$500 application fee.

2.

Home Study:

In order to adopt a child, applicants must have a home study completed by an agency licensed in their state of residence. The home study report shows that the prospective adoptive parents can offer a child a good home. You will be asked general questions about your background, education, and marital status. Your social worker will make a home visit so that she can see where the child will be living. The Adoption Hope International social worker should review the report before it is finalized to make sure that it meets the requirements of the country.

Many of the forms required for the home study will also be needed to complete your adoption overseas. These may include medical reports, personal references, a financial statement and employment letter, criminal record clearances, child abuse clearances, and copies of birth certificates, passports, marriage licenses, and divorce decrees (if applicable). We can help you find a home study agency in your state of residence.

Immigration:

Each client then needs to obtain an I-600A or I-800a form from U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). Forms can be obtained by contacting the local office or by downloading it at <http://www.uscis.gov/forms>. The completed I-600a form should be sent to your local office and the I-800a should be sent to the NBC with copies of both parents' birth certificates, marriage license, divorce decree, copy of home study and any other requirements as listed in the instructions of the forms.. Include a **money order, payable to USCIS** in the amount of \$670, plus \$80 for each parent and anyone over 18 living in the home for the fingerprinting process. Include a cover letter with your package stating what you have enclosed and what you will be sending later. Also include your address and phone number so they can contact you. After USCIS or NBC receives your form, they will schedule an appointment for you to be fingerprinted for an FBI/criminal background check.

**Please check with immigration for updates on all forms and fees.

4.

Documentation:

The next step is collecting documents for your dossier. All documents must be notarized by a commissioned notary residing in your state. After the documents are notarized, they need to be sent to State level for apostille or authentication, with the state seal.

When all the documents have been processed, forward the documents, and a copy of the documents, along with the translation fee to Adoption Hope International. Your dossier will then be forwarded to the country for translation, review, and approval

Your dossier will be sent to our in-country representative or central authority who searches for a child/ren that meets the criteria that you have specified. It can take time to identify a child/ren that fits into your family. We understand the anxiety of waiting and the feeling of no control when the paperwork process is over. Therefore, do not hesitate to contact us for support.

The process of receiving a referral is very different in each country and is subject to change. You will always have the opportunity to review available medical information prior to making a decision. Adoption Hope International will not withhold information, but we cannot guarantee the completeness of the information. We suggest that you share this information with a physician trained in international adoption medicine so that they can alert you to medical and developmental concerns. Once an adoption is finalized, the child is legally your child. Even if you are American citizens, if both parents do not meet the child prior to the finalization of the adoption, the child will not automatically become a United States citizen upon arrival in the United States. In these situations, the child must be re-adopted in the U.S. and then the parent must apply for citizenship for the child.

After the adoption is finalized by the judge, adoptive parents and their child/ren return to the city in which the American Consulate is located to follow up with embassy physicians and obtain the child's visa. After receipt of the child's visa, the adoptive parents will return home with their child.

5.Dossier:

Each country requires that specific documents, such as birth certificates, a home study, medicals, and police reports be gathered by the prospective family. When compiled together, these documents are known as a "Dossier" (pronounced doss-e-a). The dossier must go through several verification steps before being sent to the foreign country. These steps include notarization of each document, or a document verification cover letter notarized by the client, certification depending on the document and State, obtaining an authentication seal or apostil seal from the Secretary of State in the parents' state. Our staff is prepared to assist you throughout this process, as this is such an important part of international adoption procedure. Please make sure your **passport and notary's license is not going to expire for at least 6 months.**

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION COSTS

There are many costs involved in the international adoption process.

Some fees are clearly definable at the outset, such as agency fees for placement, home study, post-placement and post adoption reporting, and fees set by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for filing a petition to bring an orphan into the United States, fingerprinting, and obtaining a visa for the child/ren.

Estimates and/or ranges of fees established in the foreign countries are provided in this document. Please remember that they are subject to change at any time, often without advance warning. These include but are not limited to foreign placement fees and costs of dossier translation and authentication.

Other adoption expenses are more within the control of the adoptive families, although sometimes, due to the assignment of court dates, timing of travel, etc., there is less flexibility than desired. For example, clients may be able to shop around for airfares and/or apply frequent flyer mileage from certain air carriers for discounted fares. **The agency strongly recommends that only refundable tickets with flexible travel dates be purchased.** Obtaining passport photos may be discounted for members of automobile or travel clubs such as AAA. Notarization of dossier documents may be free of charge for customers of certain banks or other financial institutions or offered at no cost to employees by their company's legal department.

Clients are responsible for all of the above costs, as well as their own out-of-pocket costs for long-distance calls, postage, express carriers, copying, notarization, apostilles, passports, visas, etc. While traveling to adopt, clients are responsible for their own travel expenses, lodging and food, etc. Adoptive families should allocate funds for touring and purchasing souvenirs while visiting their child's country of origin. Remember that all souvenirs and pictures will represent a piece of your child's heritage.

It is important for prospective parents to consider all of the costs associated with international adoption and to plan accordingly.

HOMESTUDY AND POST-PLACEMENT/POST ADOPTION FEES

In order to fully process an international adoption petition, Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) requires a completed home study of the prospective adoptive parent(s). All countries also require the home study report as part of the dossier used to approve a family's adoption request. If applicants do not live within the geographic area serviced by Adoption Hope International, we will assist in locating a local agency to perform the home study and post-placement services. **All home studies must be prepared under the auspices of an agency licensed by the applicant's state of residence.**

During the home study, many documents are gathered, interviews are conducted, and the social worker visits the family's home. Although specific requirements vary by agency and state of residence, the documents required may include: autobiographical statements, birth certificates, marriage certificate, physician's statements on the health of the adoptive

parents, criminal record check and child abuse clearances, financial statements, and personal and/or professional reference letters.

At the conclusion of the home study process, the social worker issues a written home study report, which includes a summary of the education, health, finances, child-rearing practices, and home environment of the applicants. It also provides the social worker's assessment of the applicants' suitability for adoptive parenting. As noted earlier, this home study report is submitted to USCIS and is also incorporated into the foreign dossier prepared by the adoptive parents for submission to the adopted child's country of origin.

The home study process provides an opportunity to investigate and explore important issues in the adoption experience. Through document preparation, interviews with the social worker, and home visits, prospective parents will learn more about themselves and be better prepared to make fully informed decisions. The process should be helpful, pleasant and growth enhancing. Although it is truly an assessment of the adoptive parents' ability to successfully integrate an adopted child into their family, the social worker's goal is to help and not to judge the applicants. Agencies are much more interested in bringing families together than keeping them apart.

In addition to the home study, most foreign countries require post-placement monitoring and reporting for a specified period of time following the adoption. Such post-placement/post adoption supervision is also required by some states in order to formally re-adopt in the United States. **If the adopting parents do not meet the child prior to the court hearing, the child does not automatically become a United States citizen and must be re-adopted in an American court.** Post placement/post adoption reports are also sent by the agency to the appropriate department in the sending country to let them know how the children they have placed are doing. These reports are crucial to the continuation of international adoption programs. Your failure to complete the required reports jeopardizes future placements. At least six pictures of the child/ren must be attached to each report. It is important that some of the pictures show the child/ren with friends and family members.

Home study and post-placement/post adoption fees are established by the performing agencies to cover the costs of services rendered and will vary between agencies. Adoption Hope International is licensed to conduct home studies in South Carolina. The fee for a **home study is \$1000 to \$1,375** and the first **post placement report is \$300 to \$500**. The other reports are \$150 to \$250. Home study packets are available upon request.

Traveling families are responsible for the cost of their own food, hotel, and travel. We will assist you in making these arrangements. In some areas, it is possible to stay with host families or in apartments where food is included in the cost of lodging. It is recommended that families stay in the same hotel as other families adopting at the same time. If you prefer to make your own arrangements, please clear it with the agency before making a non-refundable deposit. The location must be reasonably convenient to the orphanage, the Embassy, and the local court so that our drivers can accommodate you. Please let us know well in advance of travel if you have special needs that will affect your choice of housing.

POLICY PROHIBITING CHILD BUYING

Adoption Hope International, Inc. prohibits its employees and agents from giving money or other consideration, directly or indirectly, to a child's parent(s), other individual(s), or an entity as payment for the child or as an inducement to release the child. If permitted or required by the child's country of origin, Adoption Hope International may remit reasonable payments for activities related to the adoption proceedings, pre-birth and birth medical costs, the care of the child, the care of the birth mother while pregnant and immediately following birth of the child, or the provision of child welfare and child protection services generally. Permitted or required contributions shall not be remitted as payment for the child or as an inducement to release the child.

Adoption Hope International has written policies and procedures in place reflecting the prohibitions listed above and reinforce them in its employee training programs. Any employee or representative of the agency violating this policy will be dismissed. Clients are urged to report any suspected violations immediately.

Adoption Hope International works to find loving homes for children needing permanent homes. Great care has been taken to work with only ethical providers working through legitimate government agencies.

We at Adoption Hope International believe that every child, regardless of age, special needs or nationality deserves a loving home and family. Our Mission is to find adoptive families for those children whose birth parents cannot take care of them.

AGENCY FEES

These fees are for services provided by Adoption Hope International. Services include application processing, review of home study and other documents, guidance in choosing a program appropriate for the applicant, and coordination of all activities with the foreign facilitator in the identification and referral of a child.

The agency fee for Adoption Hope International services for the placement of one child is Five thousand five hundred (\$ 5,500.00)*, which is payable as follows:

- \$ 500.00 **Non-refundable** application fee due with submission of application.
- \$ 1,000.00 due upon submission of adoption contract to Adoption Hope International.
- \$ 2,500.00 due with submission of completed Dossier.
- \$ 2,000.00 due with acceptance of referral.

The referral follows dossier completion and immigration clearance. All fees are subject to change.

Application fees are due at the time of application and are not refundable. Unused portions of other fees will be refunded upon withdrawal from the program. Actual costs of services, such as translations, postage, and filing fees, will be deducted from the refund as well as a \$2,500 fee for professional services.

If siblings are adopted at the same time, there is an additional agency fee of \$1,500 due to Adoption Hope International. If the family adopts two unrelated children, the adoptions are handled as separate processes, but with a reduced agency fee of \$4,000 for the second adoption. If a family adopts another child at any time in the future, the \$500.00 application fee is waived.

Additional Associated Expenses:

Processing and translation of dossier (non refundable) and post-placement reports. Federal Express, postage, and international mailing, wiring expenses ,courier expenses , embassy fees, embassy registration fees, State Department DC Fees, Secretary of State Fees, printing and reproduction fees are the clients responsibility . Additional fees may arise throughout the process. There are additional translation fees program specific.

ADMINISTRATIVE FEES

\$1,000.00 due upon submission of adoption contract to Adoption Hope International. It covers Federal Express, international mailing, and courier expenses.

HOME STUDY REVIEW

\$200 review of home study to comply with Hague Convention Standards S

Charges for South Carolina residents only.

- a) SLED/DSS clearances at \$25.00 per person residing in the home who are over the age of 18
- b) Inter-country review fee by DSS for international adoptions - \$225.00.
(Information id provided on the DSS website at www.state.sc.us/dss South
***South Carolina residents remember to file your Request for Non-Recurring Costs Reimbursement for Special Needs Adoptions with the Department of Social Services before you go to court.

Refund Policy

Adoption Hope International refund policy is as follows. Application fees are due at the time of application and are not refundable. Part of your agency fee is refunded based on the amount of services provided. In some cases no money will be refunded. Translation fees, postage, clinical reviews of documents, filing fees and accreditation fees will be deducted from the agency fee. An additional cost of \$2500.00 is due for professional services. If your dossier is submitted to the country, any fees for processing will be deducted. Documents are not always able to be returned once they are submitted. If parents fail to show up for court the agency will consider the adoption complete and no refund will be given. If a family is given an unfavorable decision in court, no refund will be given. Fees paid to persons providing services in other countries are non-refundable.

INTERNATIONAL FEES

International fees vary by country and, in some programs, are driven by the age of the child and/or the region involved. These fees are not controlled by Adoption Hope International and are subject to change without notice. When children are in an orphanage, the fees may include a donation to the orphanage. The international fee is normally paid directly to the coordinator in the country or to Adoption Hope International who will wire the fees to the country.

Country	International fees vary with each program	Time Frame after dossier submission	Age, Marital Status & Criteria. Parents must be at least 25 years old.	Per Diem Expenses In Country	Ages of Available Children
Russia	\$14,500 to \$18,000 per child \$2500 accreditation fee payable to LSS	Regions Two trips; first trip 3-4 days; second trip 5-7days.Moscow 2 trips 2 ½ weeks .	Married couples over 25, Single women. women over 45 except infants	\$100-150 lodging, host family , hotels available Russian Consulate registration \$400 100-200-per day in country coordinator fees	18 months and up.
Estonia	\$2,500-18,000 per child	6 to 12 months: 2 trips. Preview trip can be waved in certain circumstances. 2 nd trip 8 to 14 days	Married couples and Single Men and Women.	\$100-\$150 lodging, food, \$100-130 hotels. In country fee \$100-200 per day	Sibling groups 3-12 years & school-age children
Mexico	\$6,000 to \$10,000 per child	12-18 months; trip 1-3 weeks	Married couples, single women over 25	\$100-\$150 a day lodging,\$100 per day expenses	Toddler to 15 years, sibling groups
Nicaragua	\$6000-10,000 per child	12 – 18 months One trip 2 to 4 weeks	Married couples and single women up to age 55(age requirement waived on case by case basis)	60-150 hotel per day. apartment 300-400 per week 100-200 per day for miscellaneous expenses	Boys and girls ages 18 months and older

*****International fees are determined by service providers in that country**

Translation dossier processing fees are an additional \$1100-\$2000 ,depending on the program.. Fees are subject to change without notice.

OTHER COSTS

The following is a representative list of other expenses incurred during the international adoption process: Please check with immigration updated fees and forms.

U.S. Passport (price variables: new/renewal, adult/child)	\$ 67.00 - \$ 97.00
USCIS Application Fee	\$ 670.00
USCIS Fingerprinting Charge (per person 18 or older in the home)	\$ 80.00
U.S. Embassy Visa Processing of Adopted Child (paid at the embassy)	\$ 400.00
Fees due at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate must be paid in cash, Usually in U.S. dollars for the exact amount of the charge.	
Child's Medical Exam By Embassy Approved Physician	(estimate) \$ 120-450
Child's Foreign Passport and Visa Photographs	(estimate) \$100.00
Children's Birth certificates	(estimate) \$ 10.00
Visa Registration (Russia)	\$400.00
Embassy Exit Fees	\$380 per child

Airline tickets are the families responsibility --- Varies based on country
Please bring clothing for your child-it is not supplied by the orphanage
Host family or hotel are the families responsibility----- approx. \$125 -400
Please allow extra money for food, transportation and miscellaneous fees,
expenses and sight seeing. \$100-\$200
Nicaragua and Mexico are new programs so there may be unanticipated
expenses.

The cost of the following items varies greatly from state to state:

Police Clearance and Child Abuse Clearance
Medical Exams for Adoptive Parent(s)
Original Certified Vital Records (birth certificate, marriage certificate, divorce
decrees)
Notarization, Authentication, Apostilling of Dossier Documents

Optional Costs:

Evaluation of the Referral by a Physician
Re-Adoption in the United States—if your child enters on a IR-4 visa re-adoption
is required –we recommend re-adoption for IR-3 or IR4

**When preparing for travel, it is important to obtain current information regarding
currency handling in the foreign country. Some expenses need to be paid in cash using US
currency. Most areas do not accept traveler's checks, many places do not accept credit
cards, and ATMs are not always readily available or functional. Prior to leaving the United
States, obtain new issue currency with no rips or writing on the bills. For larger fees, you
must have large denomination bills (\$50's or \$100's). You will not be paying your entire
international fee in cash. Adoption Hope International will provide information specific to
the areas in which you will be traveling prior to your departure. You will also want to check
with your doctor as to his/her recommendations of any immunizations you may need for**

foreign travel.

TYPES OF IMMIGRANT VISAS

Visa: It is a document issued by the country (for a fee) allowing a person to enter the US. In order to enter the US, your child will require an immigrant visa. This may be a piece of paper or a stamp in the child's passport by the Embassy... As a part of the immigrant visa application process, your child will be examined by a US-approved foreign physician. Your child will enter the US on one of two kinds of IR ("Immediate Relative") Immigrant Visas:

IR-3: the child was adopted overseas and (1) the adoptive parent (if single parent) or both parents (if married couple) saw/observed the child prior to the adoption and (2) the foreign adoption grants both adoptive parents and child the same rights, responsibilities, & privileges as would an adoption in the US. Children issued IR-3 immigrant visas do not require re-adoption in the US under federal laws.

* **IR-4** the child is coming to the United States for adoption. An IR-4 is issued to a child when (1) the foreign country's laws only permit the adoptive parents to obtain guardianship of the child rather than to fully adopt the child in that country and/or (2) the prospective adoptive parent(s) did not see/observe the child prior to the foreign adoption or only one parent saw the child prior to adoption.. Children issued IR-4 immigrant visas must be adopted or readopted after they enter the US.

Re-adoption: is when a family re-adopts or adopts a child again once back in the US. Although the foreign birth certificate of your child is legal and binding in the US , and is not generally required (unless both parents did not travel to see the child or unless a full and final adoption was not completed in country), re-adoption will result in a birth certificate from the child's state of residence. Re-adoption will take place in the county court in which you live and may prevent problems getting copies of birth certificates later.

ADOPTION PROCESS

Brief Overview

ESTONIA

Most children are school age and part of sibling groups and have special needs. We usually do not get Children under the age of two years and they usually have special needs. Preview trips are required for all children. Prospective parents spend a minimum of 2 days in Estonia on the preview trip. Preview trips can only be made after a family has an approved I-800a. After referral acceptance, the legal process takes approximately 6 to 10 months to complete. Parent(s) return to Estonia to attend court and pick up their child. The family should allow 10 business days in country. Estonia requires 4 post-adoption reports at 6 months, 12 months, 24 months and 36 months. I-800 approval cable should be sent to the U.S. Consulate, Tallinn, Estonia. Estonia is a Hague country.

MEXICO

The children available are toddlers to 15 years old. There are sibling groups and special needs children also available. Mexico is a Hague country. Families must have a completed home study and I-800a approval before referrals can be made. Single women may adopt. Families are over 25 years of age and maximum age depends on the State in Mexico and age of desired child. Travel is one to two trips for 1-3 weeks. Post adoption reports are required.

NICARAGUA

Adoption Hope International has a new program in Nicaragua. The dossier is submitted to Mi Familia, the adoption authority in Nicaragua. The family is approved by Mi Familia and issued a referral of a child. The family travel time is 2-4 weeks in country with the child for final court. . The adoption decree is issued with the new birth certificate. The immigrant visa is processed at the US Embassy in Managua. The entire process can take 6 months to 1 year or longer. Referrals are made after dossier submission. Post adoption reports are 1 report every year for 18 years. An I-600a approval is needed for this country

RUSSIA

Dossier is submitted to Russia for most of our programs. At the time of referral, most of the children have already been in the Russian Central Registry for the required 6 months. Referrals are made after the dossier has been submitted. Court dates can take place 4 to 8 weeks after referral acceptance. Travel to Moscow or the regions is done in two trips. The first trip is very short and the second trip is 2½ weeks, possibly less in the regions. Russia requires four post-placement reports be performed by the home study agency social worker. Pictures must be attached. I-600A approval cable should be sent to the U.S. Consulate in Moscow. After the adoption, the child must be registered with the Russian Consulate. The registration does not affect the child's American citizenship.

For additional information on recent additions to our program, please call Diana Adams at 1-843-222-2077 or Barbara Harle at 1-843-236-7520. They will be happy to answer your questions and discuss the adoption process with you.

Grievance Procedure

LEVEL ONE: Clients who are unhappy with the handling of their case should immediately discuss their concerns with the person handling their case. They may also ask to discuss the situation with another staff member. If their concern is not resolved, the client should submit a complaint in writing to the Executive Director or the Associate Director. The letter should include an explanation of the problem and suggestions of how the problem could be resolved. Please include dates and copies of any relevant documents. If possible, immediate steps will be taken to resolve the problem. Otherwise, the agency will respond in writing within thirty days.

LEVEL TWO: When the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the client, the client should contact the Clinical Director. They should provide the Clinical Director with a copy of the original letter, a copy of the agency response, and a letter explaining why the agency resolution is unacceptable. The Clinical Director shall reply within two weeks.

LEVEL THREE: When a dispute is not resolved in Step Two, a client can appeal to the Board of Directors. The Chairman of the Board shall be responsible for notifying all the board members of the complaint and convening and collating a consensus opinion.

LEVEL FOUR: Clients can contact the South Carolina licensing board if they feel that their rights have been violated.

When the complaint involves a placement in process and the complaint needs to be resolved in a timely manner, telephone calls and emails can be used to speed up the process.

THE REALITIES AND RISKS OF ADOPTING CHILDREN FROM OVERSEAS

Children come into care and become available for adoption for many reasons. Some are born out of wedlock, and their single mothers release them for adoption in order to provide a better life for the child. Poverty and ill health, death, or divorce can all be reasons for children to enter the child welfare system. Some children have been removed from their families by authorities due to neglect or abuse. Often very little background information is available. Rarely, if ever, is there any medical history for the child or his biological parents. Many children become eligible for adoption due to their status as abandoned children. In these cases, there is usually no information, and a birth date is given to the child.

Children from overseas may suffer from undetected medical problems or diseases. We seldom have any information about prenatal care, medical, social or developmental history. Medical exams are given, and occasionally reports may be inconclusive or inaccurate. Medical evaluations attempt to identify serious medical problems, but some problems may be undiagnosed. A child from overseas can arrive with any kind of ailment including malnourishment, parasites, skin diseases, head lice, upper respiratory or ear infections; or more serious conditions. Occasionally, a child may arrive with a very serious disorder that later develops into a life-threatening situation. Children may arrive with a contagious disease that can be transmitted to family members. It may be a simple virus, or it could be tuberculosis, hepatitis, or even AIDS. Medical techniques abroad often do not allow for the comprehensive screening that is available here in our country. A child may arrive in very good health and later develop a serious problem such as blindness/hearing impairment. Families who adopt from overseas must understand that there is a medical risk.

Children from overseas may also suffer from emotional deprivation or trauma that may have effects on their psychological well-being. All of the children have some degree of adjustment problems. Developmental delays are very common, and it is often impossible to determine if such delays are due to simple lack of stimulation or whether the child has an inherent mental deficiency. Depending on the child's age, they will have experienced separations from loved ones. Some children remain "emotionally needy," unable to give affection to others. During the initial adjustment phase many behaviors may be seen. There can be aggressiveness, depression, bedwetting or sleep problems, food difficulties, or problems with adhering to limits. The child may view the new parent with detachment, disregard, or the child may attach to one person, unable to let him/her out of their sight. The child may have temper tantrums, be destructive, lie, steal, or may be overly passive and compliant. Some children repress their feelings of insecurity, and these anxieties may resurface when the child is older, i.e., in adolescence. The child may have had some very difficult things to deal with in their past, such as multiple separations, abuse or neglect, or sexual abuse. There can be long-term problems for the child that can mean on-going behavioral or psychological difficulties. A family who considers an older child should acquaint themselves with the reality of what such a placement will mean. Families must be patient, flexible, and understanding of the psychological difficulties involved.

Many children from overseas have limited educational experiences. Similarly, we usually have no reliable data regarding the child's intelligence level. Older children cannot be expected to "catch up" with their American peers. Many older children experience language difficulties, and some suffer from learning disabilities.

Families should also be familiar with the physical appearances of children from other countries. Most likely, a foreign-born child will have a different skin color and features, and you must be prepared for attention, stares, or questions. If you have reservations or any prejudice or ill feeling toward people of a different race or skin color or culture, you should not consider foreign adoption.

To summarize, families who decide to adopt children from overseas must recognize that there are no guarantees as to the health, intelligence, psychological stability, appearance, development, or behavior of a child.

OUR PLEDGE

At Adoption Hope International, we will strive to make your adoption process as smooth as possible but there are uncertainties over which we have no control. Procedures and laws in the countries in which we work can change without notice. Forms can change and requirements can be added. This means that paperwork needs to be redone on occasion. Time frames are estimates based on our many years of experience. Information cannot always be obtained as quickly or as often as we would like but we make every effort to get it as quickly and as often as possible. Occasionally, a child

becomes unavailable for adoption because a relative or native of the country steps forward wanting to care for the child. In these rare cases, while we recognize that the deep sense of loss a family can experience at such a time cannot be erased, we try to obtain another referral for the family quickly. There are thousands of children that waiting for a loving home.

Please remember that a child is not a product that comes with a guarantee. We make every effort to obtain complete medical and social information about the children we refer. However, it is always possible that a medical condition is not yet diagnosed or that a child will develop a serious medical condition later. We can only promise that we will not withhold any information from you.

We understand that it is difficult to be dependent on other people to help you form your family. If you decide to put your trust in our services, we promise to do everything within our powers to deserve that trust. Our services do not end when you bring your child/ren home. After we guide you through the final paperwork in the United States, we are always available for support and guidance.

