

Introduction to International Adoption

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Positive Aspects of International Adoption

- There is minimal risk of a birth family deciding not to move forward with the adoption plan.
- The eligibility requirements can be less stringent.
- The process tends to be more linear than domestic infant adoptions.
- There are many young children in need of a family.
- A portion of your adoption fees are used to help other children in need.

Risks in International Adoption

- Your expectations for information and timeliness as an American may not be realistic for the culture of the other country.
- The rules can change even after your paperwork is submitted to the foreign government.
- Foreign governments can decide to stop foreign adoptions at any time.
- You may receive limited medical information about the child you hope to adopt.
- The medical information from other countries may be difficult to interpret or inaccurate.
- It is rare to receive any medical information about the child's birth family.
- PLEASE NOTE: There are Pediatricians who specialize in International Adoption to help you evaluate the referral materials you receive and identify the risks.
- You may not receive background information about the child's birth family. Some countries are more open than others in this regard.

Choosing a Country

- When choosing a country for adoption it is important to remember that the culture of this country will become part of your life. One of your responsibilities as an adoptive parent is to teach the child to appreciate the culture of their birth because that will help your child with identity and self-esteem. This job is difficult if you don't feel a connection to the country.
- Think about the amount of risk you are willing to manage. A country that is new to international adoption may pose more risk of delays, ethical scandals or even shut downs.
- Get a Pre-Adoption Consultation at the IAC Center to explore the different variables involved in selecting a country. This consultation will help you to be certain that you are asking the questions that are the most meaningful to you when you select a country and an adoption agency and help you to make timely decisions that are mindful of the long-term issues inherent in becoming a family through adoption.
- Approach agencies that offer programs you are interested in and ask to talk with some of the families that used their program.

The Basic International Adoption Process

Home Study & Pre-Adoption Training

A home study is a written assessment completed by a social worker that thoroughly describes a family and recommends the family for adoption. It is submitted to US CIS and the Foreign Government. Many agencies include formal pre-adoption training as part of the home study process to help prospective adoptive families know what to expect from the adoption process and parenting an adopted child. You may find that you want to supplement this training with other adoption education resources.

Pre-Approval

An adopted child from another country needs a visa to enter the U.S. Families must file with the U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services (US CIS) for pre-approval.

Application to Foreign Government

Most countries require that a family submit a dossier of application materials directly to their government. This application is reviewed and approved.

Matching

Matching procedures vary from country to country. Usually, the family receives a photograph of the child and a medical report before they travel. The decision to accept the child is based on this information. In some Eastern European countries, families do not receive information about a child prior to travel. They travel to the country twice. There is one trip to meet the child and a second to complete the legal procedures.

Travel

For most international adoption programs, families travel to the country and complete the legal proceedings to formally adopt a child and process the child's US visa. The time spent in the country can be as short as a week or as long as eight weeks, depending upon the process in that country.

Post Placement

Most "sending countries" require that the family submit reports, completed by a social worker, after the child is living in the U.S. Timely submission of these reports is important in keeping the adoption program open.

Re-Adoption in the U.S.

Most families complete a re-adoption in the U.S. This may be required for some countries.

Internet Resources

Most of the web sites listed below are created by parent groups and have a lot of great information about culture and heritage. These sites are a great way to connect with other adoptive parents and to learn from their personal experiences.

General:

Rainbow Kids www.rainbowkids.com
Karen's Adoption Links – very comprehensive!
<http://www.karensadoptionlinks.com/>

China:

Families with Children from China www.fwcc.org

Guatemala:

Guatemala Adoptive Families Network <http://www.guatefam.org/>

Korea:

Korean American Adoptive Family Network (www.kaanet.com)

Latin American:

Latin America Adoptive Parent Society of Northern New Jersey
<http://www.lapa-nnj.com>

Russia & Eastern Europe:

Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoption (www.frua.org)
Eastern European Adoption www.eeadopt.org

Vietnam:

Adopt Vietnam www.adoptvietnam.org
Families with Children from Vietnam www.fcvn.org