

INTRODUCTION

Dear Adoptive Family:

Welcome to what will become one of the most memorable experiences of your life, an incredible walk of faith that will ultimately unite you with your chosen child! We feel honored that you have chosen to work with All God's Children International (AGCI). This will be an amazing and unforgettable journey, resulting in one of God's greatest blessings to your family.

We trust that in the coming months we can be an encouragement to you as we work together to bring your child home. If you need us at any time during the adoption process, our doors are open, and we are only a phone call away.

Blessings,

AGCI Adoption Team

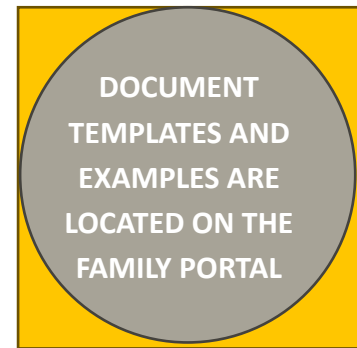
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Please be sure to keep a copy of all documents for your own records.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

OVERVIEW

Here are a few tips for you to read before you begin working on the paperwork phase of your adoption process. The adoption journey can be lengthy and requires much patience, and the paperwork phase of this journey can sometimes seem daunting. The tips in this packet will help facilitate the process and help you understand document and process requirements more clearly. We will work with you along the way to guide and support you through this process and to answer any questions you may have.

WHAT IS A DOSSIER?

The dossier (“doss-e-ay”) is a compilation of official documents, much like a portfolio, providing details about an adoptive family. The documents included in a family’s dossier are based on the requirements of the foreign government from which a family is adopting. The foreign government uses the information included in a family’s dossier to process and approve the adoption of a child from that country.

THE TABLE OF CONTENTS IS YOUR ROAD MAP:

Start by reviewing the table of contents. This is a list of all the documents you will need to complete. We have organized each section of this packet deliberately based on the order in which you should complete them. Your paperwork process is composed of three “mini-processes”—your Home Study, Dossier, and Immigration Pre-approval. Your focus will first be on completing your home study process, including your adoptive parent education. Once this is almost completed you will focus your attention on completing the remaining dossier documents and apply for immigration pre-approval.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR DOSSIER:

Each country’s government has strict policies regarding adoption documents; therefore, it is very important that you carefully read through this packet and meticulously follow the instructions and examples we have provided for you. Please highlight any areas you feel need to be clarified before you begin and feel free to ask as many questions as necessary. Below is a list of guidelines that must be followed for each of your dossier documents:

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Every document must state your legal name (for example, if you commonly go by Matt but your legal name is Matthew, your documents must refer to you as Matthew).
- Documents must not contain any corrected errors (i.e., white out, over-writes, cross outs, scribbles, etc.). This is to avoid any concern about the validity of a document and because your dossier will be translated. Even the slightest correction will result in you having to redo the document.
- All information must be consistent across all your documents.
- Documents must not be hole-punched.
- All documents must be notarized on the same date on which they were signed.
- All documents must have notary commission expiration dates of at least 12 months into the future from when your dossier is submitted to AGCI.

Note: Any document with a notary commission that expires *prior* to Apostille will need to be resubmitted with a valid expiration date.

ACCESSING DOSSIER DOCUMENT FORMS:

Along with this dossier packet, AGCI has provided templates, examples and official dossier forms you will need as you put together your dossier. These documents can be accessed through our family portal on [AGCI Family Portal \(myagci.org\)](https://myagci.org). The password is "myagci". Within the portal, simply navigate to your country and click on the dossier tab.

SUBMITTING YOUR DOSSIER TO AGCI:

After you have completed your dossier documents, with the exception of your I800A approval, you will submit a virtual copy to your International Adoption Specialist (IAS) for review. Refer to your dossier checklist for submission guidelines. Once approved, your IAS will instruct you where to mail your completed dossier. Please note that the dossier will not be registered in the country until after the I800A approval letter is submitted

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

PLAN TO COMPLETE THE DOSSIER WITHIN TEN MONTHS FROM CONTRACT:

In order to keep your adoption moving forward in a timely way, AGCI expects you to complete your dossier within ten months of the contract. Per your AGCI contract, failing to submit a complete dossier, including a home study, within the ten-month time frame will result in additional fees. If your dossier submission process exceeds twelve months, your adoption may be terminated. Please keep us informed if there are questions or obstacles in your paperwork process so that we can ensure you will meet this ten-month deadline.

NOTARY AND APOSTILLE

NOTARIZING A DOCUMENT

Notarization Defined:

A notarized document is one that has been witnessed by a notary public for the purposes of ensuring the identity of the person completing/signing the document. For a document to be notarized, the individual completing/signing the document must be present with the notary at the time of notarization.

Who Notarizes a Document:

A notary public is an individual authorized or commissioned by the government, typically by the secretary of state, to act as an impartial witness to the signing of official documents and to administer oaths. A notary public is not concerned with the accuracy of a document but instead can attest to the identity of the individual signing a document. Notary publics can often be found in banks.

What You Need to Know:

- You must sign and date your document in front of the notary. Do not sign your documents beforehand.
- Notarization may require both parents' signatures. Adoptive parents must both be present before the notary public at the time specific documents are notarized and cannot have each of their signatures notarized separately.
- Dates must be identical. The date a notary public notarizes a document must be the same date the document is being signed by the person completing that document.
- Notary commission numbers are optional in some states. Some states do not issue a commission number to a notary public. If your notary public does not have a commission number, it is acceptable for this line to be left blank on your documents. Make sure to confirm if this applies in your state and is not just an oversight by the notary public.
- Notary language varies by state. Every state has specific language that is used for the notarization of documents. Your notary public may add additional information to your document other than the basic requirements listed on the next page.
- Document notarization differences. Certain documents will be notarized differently than others. Some documents will be notarized as part of the original document with the signature of the person signing the form with the notary public's information located directly below the original text. Other documents will be notarized as a "True and Accurate Copy" and you will have these notarized as such. To download a True and Accurate Copy form, visit the portal at <https://myagci.org>

NOTARY AND APOSTILLE

- True and Accurate Copy. In some cases, documents arrive without a notary. In these cases, you may be able to use the True and Accurate cover sheet provided in the portal to notarize the document. This allows you to attach the cover sheet to the document, and then sign in front of a notary. This attests that the document being notarized is a true and accurate copy of the original document. Each country has their own requirements on which documents can be notarized with a true and accurate copy form. Refer to the dossier checklist for more details.

Common Notarization Mistakes to Avoid:

- A document may be denied a state certification or apostille at the Secretary of State's office if the document is notarized incorrectly. Contact the Secretary of State if you are concerned about your notarized document being denied.
- Expired commission. Please make sure your notary public's commission does not expire for at least 12 months after your dossier is submitted to AGCI.
- Notary signature. Please make sure that the notary public's signature exactly matches the name he/she is printing on the document, as well as on his/her notary stamp. This includes middle initials/name.
- Notary stamp/seal. Please make sure that the text of the notary public's stamp/seal is clear and legible, as sometimes, a stamp will bleed on paper.
- The notary public must not make any corrections on the document. Even the slightest over-write will result in you having to redo the document.

COUNTY CERTIFICATION

County-certified means that the notary public has been verified by the county government in which the notary public is commissioned. Not all states require county certification.

Who Certifies a Document:

Your notary public should be able to direct you to the county office that handles his/her notary public commission. If the notary public does not have this information, you can contact the Secretary of State's office.

NOTARY AND APOSTILLE

Which States Require County Certification:

Currently, county certification is required in addition to the notary statement in the following states: Alabama, California, Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland, and New York. You will need to contact your Secretary of State's office to ask if your state currently requires county certification.

What You Need to Ask:

It is important to ask your notary public which county they are commissioned in before your document is notarized so that you are aware of which county you will contact to receive your county certification.

What You Need to Know:

Once notarized, you can either mail your document for county certification or visit the closest office to get the county certification completed in person. The cost varies depending on the county, so call ahead to verify the fees and directions

STATE APOSTILLE

Document apostille means that the Secretary of State's office verifies the validity and correctness of the notary public that has witnessed the signatures on your documents. Apostille and certification are the two different forms of document certification offered by the Secretary of State's Authentications department. A state apostille is a separate document that will be attached to the dossier document that you present and will read "apostille" at the top.

What you need to know:

- A cover letter must accompany state apostille. When sending your documents to the Secretary of State's Authentications department, please prepare a cover letter informing them that your documents need to be apostilled for an international adoption in Costa Rica. If you forget to do this, the package may come back to you, and your documents will not be accepted by the Costa Rican government.
- Call the Secretary of State or go online to verify address/fees. You should call and verify the address and fees with your Secretary of State's office prior to mailing or hand-delivering your documents. When you call, ask to speak with the Authentications department. You can find the contact information for your state's office online.
- Use a reputable delivery service for your apostille package. If you choose to mail your documents to the Secretary of State, it is important that you ship through a courier that can

NOTARY AND APOSTILLE

track your package. Remember to include a prepaid return envelope that is also traceable. It is always a good idea to send all dossier documents through a reputable courier. In the past, families have lost their entire dossier through regular mail because it was untraceable. As a result, we do not suggest using USPS for any mailings, even if you ask for a traceable package. Some suggestions for reliable couriers are DHL, UPS or FedEx.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- The actual name of the notary public that notarized your documents must be the same name that is verified on the apostille page. If the names do not match, the document will not be accepted by the government in Costa Rica.
- Do not put several documents together and get one apostille. Even if your documents share the same name and same date of a notary, each document in the dossier needs to be apostilled separately.
- Documents must be apostilled in the state in which the document originated. While the documents you are gathering—home study, doctor's letters, power of attorneys, etc.—will most likely be apostilled in the state in which you are currently living, a marriage certificate or divorce decree may have to be apostilled at another state's Secretary of State's office.

HOME STUDY & PARENT EDUCATION

HOME STUDY OVERVIEW

Please contact your home study provider for home study requirements. Some documents for your dossier can be completed at the same time as your home study documents. For Costa Rica you can use the home study agency medical form for the home study.

A licensed social worker, working through an AGCI cooperating agency, assesses your home environment and produces a home study for use in the adoption process.

What You Need to Know:

All God's Children International is a Hague accredited agency. We recommend you use an approved cooperating agency provided to you at contract. If you have not contacted your home study agency, please be sure to do so right away to initiate the home study process. The home study process should be finalized by month six. If you are experiencing any delays, please alert your IAS immediately. AGCI will provide a copy of our current home study guidelines, along with your country's specific requirements, to your home study agency.

Note: It is crucial that your home study agency follow the guidelines and requirements they have been provided.

- The home study process, timeline, and required documentation vary by state and agency. Typically, the average time frame in which to complete a home study is two to three months after the home study agency has received all your required documents. Due to the lengthy process, AGCI strongly encourages families to focus their initial attention on the home study process and adoption education.
- Once the home study draft has been written, AGCI asks that the home study agency send the study to you for review. Once you have reviewed it, the home study is then sent to AGCI for review.
- The approved parameters (age, gender and number of children) must match exactly as to what is written on the PANI Reflection Sheet and in the psychological evaluation.
- AGCI will review the study for compliance with USCIS and the sending country's current requirements; however, we are unable to take responsibility for future changes in country standards, spelling/grammatical issues or factual misrepresentations.
- Once finalized your home study agency will provide you with three notarized originals with copies of the home study agency's license.

HOME STUDY & PARENT EDUCATION

Please ensure the documentation provided for your home study is consistent with the rest of the documentation in your dossier. For example, income amounts must match throughout, your psychological evaluation must match your approved parameters in your home study and special need form. Your USCIS application must match your home study for the number of children and ages of children you are planning to adopt.

ADOPTIVE PARENT EDUCATION

AGCI requires that all adoptive parent(s) complete courses through Families Are Forever (FAF™). These courses can be found at [Families are Forever](#). Please ensure you are enrolled in the International Premium bundle. This training is designed to help prepare families for the rewards and challenges associated with their international adoption. It is an expectation that both adoptive parents complete the education. All required training must be completed prior to home study approval. Please submit certificates of completion to the social worker writing your home study. This training meets Hague requirements and is supplemental to those required by your home study agency and/or state of residence. AGCI is unable to review your home study until all Families Are Forever™ certificates have been received by AGCI.

Families Are Forever: Pre-Adoption Education:

- FAF 101: Preparing for the Journey of Adoption
- FAF 102: Introduction to Trust-Based Relational Intervention®
- FAF 103: Children's Needs and Intercountry Adoption
- FAF 104: Understanding Children's Development
- FAF 105: Common Medical Conditions
- FAF 106: Understanding Attachment
- FAF 107: Developing Attachment
- FAF 108: Transracial Adoption: Building Cultural Awareness
- myFAF100B: Ethics and the Hague
- myFAF315.1: Sexual Development, Disruption & Healing I
- Your country specific heritage class

HOME STUDY & PARENT EDUCATION

Note: If you (returning families) have previously completed an adoption through AGCI and have completed the above education, please contact your IAS to inquire about your family's specific adoptive parent education requirements.

Submitting Your Certificates:

Premium class completion certificates will be submitted to AGCI automatically through FAF™ and stored in your family's permanent file. Please email the FAF coordinator the completion certificates for myFAFIOOB, myFAF315.1, and your country heritage class. For instructions on submitting your certificates to your home study agency, please consult with the agency and/or your social worker.

Recommended Reading:

Finally, AGCI recommends that prospective adoptive parents read the following books, based on the age of the child(ren) at placement:

- The Connected Child by Karyn Purvis, David Cross and Wendy Sunshine (all ages)
- Attaching in Adoption by Deborah Gray (all ages)
- Parenting the Hurt Child by Gregory Keck and Regina M. Kupecky (ages 2 and up)

DOCUMENTS TO ORDER

***PLEASE NOTE THAT NO DOCUMENT OR APOSTILLE CAN BE OLDER THAN 12 MONTHS OLD WHEN PANI REVIEWS YOUR DOSSIER. ALLOW ADDED TIME FOR DELIVERY, REVIEW AND TRANSLATION.**

VITAL RECORDS

Where You Obtain the Certificate and/or License:

You may order your birth certificate, marriage license, death certificate, and divorce decree (if applicable) online at [Vital Check](#). You may also contact your State or County Vital Records office. In many states, you can call and pay for these documents by credit card and have them sent directly to your home. Other states require that your request is submitted in writing. If so, prepare the necessary cover letter and send it with a check or money order to the appropriate office. If your country requires an apostilled version of your vital record certificates, request it now. If you were born outside of the United States, you will need to obtain an apostilled birth certificate with certified translation from your birth country.

What You Need to Know:

- Church/hospital certificate is not acceptable. You cannot use a certificate or license issued by a hospital or minister. Birth certificates and marriage licenses must be obtained from the Vital Records office in the state in which you were born and/or the state in which your marriage took place.
- Original documents are required. A copy of your birth certificate or marriage license is not valid. If you were born or married outside of the United States, you must order an original birth certificate from the country in which you were born and include a certified translation of the document.
- Order one certified copy of each document. The original goes in your dossier and your home study agency and USCIS will accept photocopies.
- Please order new certified copies that are less than 1 year old.

DOCUMENTS TO ORDER

PASSPORTS

Where You Obtain the Passport:

Passport applications can be obtained online or at your local post office. The following website is a helpful place to start and has a list of FAQs: http://travel.state.gov/passport_easy.html. It can take up to 14 weeks to receive a passport, so order early.

What You Need to Know:

- Photocopies of each parent's passport are required. Make a good quality copy of each of your passports. Make sure that both the picture and personal information pages are photocopied, as well as the signature page.
- Name changes must be documented. If you already have a passport and it has been amended for any reason (i.e. name change upon marriage), the amendment page of your passport must also be included. The name on the passport must match the EXACT name being used on all other documents.
- Your passport must not be expired. Please double check to make sure that your passport has not expired; if it has, it will need to be renewed before you can travel for the adoption of your child.
- Your passport must not expire within six months of your travel date. Please make sure your passport will be valid for longer than six months at the time of travel.
- If you obtain a new passport during your adoption process, please email a copy to your IAS.

DEATH/DIVORCE DECREE (IF APPLICABLE)

What You Need to Know:

- You can order a certified death decree through the Vital Records office in the state where the death occurred. A divorce decree can be ordered through the county courthouse in which the divorce was finalized.
- Church/hospital certificate is not acceptable. You cannot use a certificate or license issued by a hospital or minister. Decrees must be obtained from the Vital Records office in the state in which the death took place and/or the state in which your divorce took place.
- Certified documents are required. A copy of your death or divorce decree is not valid.

DOCUMENTS TO ORDER

- Order one certified copy of the document. The original goes into your dossier for your country and USCIS will accept photocopies.

DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY OTHERS

MEDICAL FORM(S)

A doctor must perform a physical on each adoptive parent and complete a certificate using the form provided.

What You Need to Know:

- Costa Rica does not have a specific medical form. You can use the medical form provided by your home study agency.
- The medical form must be filled in, signed, and notarized by your doctor. **Costa Rica will allow you to use the True and Accurate cover sheet so that your doctor does not have to notarize the medical form.** This allows YOU to get the document notarized yourself and then sent to your secretary of state for the apostille.
- The doctor must include his/her full signature and license number.
- Long-term medications should be named, along with condition treated, and efficacy of treatment.
- One form for each adoptive parent is required.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- If you want the doctor's signature to be notarized, call in advance to ensure there is a notary or bring a notary with you to the appointment(s).
- The notary must notarize the doctor's signature, not yours unless you are using the True and Accurate cover sheet.
- The doctor and notary must not white out, over-write, or cross out anything on the document. Even the slightest over-write will result in you having to redo the document.
- The medical form must be notarized on the same day as the form is signed unless you are using the True and Accurate cover sheet.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

A psychological evaluation is a report completed by a licensed psychologist assessing the suitability of the individual adoptive parents, their relationship and their motivation and preparedness for adoption.

DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY OTHERS

What You Need to Know:

- **This document cannot be more than 1 year old at the time it is reviewed by PANI.**
- The evaluation must be completed by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist.
- The evaluation must include the scores.
- Costa Rica will accept a joint report.
- The evaluation should be printed on a letterhead, signed, and notarized by the psychologist who performed your evaluation.
- The approved parameters (age, gender and number of children) stated in the evaluation must match exactly as to what is stated on the PANI Reflection Sheet and in your home study.
- **If your psychologist is out of state, you can use the True and Accurate cover sheet to have your signature notarized instead, then send for apostille in your state. Or you can send to the issuing state for the apostille.**
- The psychologist should be adoption competent.

EMPLOYMENT VERIFICATION

What You Need to Know:

- You will need to have an employment letter written on your behalf.
- The income stated in your employment verification should be consistent with the income stated in your home study and financial statement.
- The employment verification should be written on the company's letterhead, as well as signed by a person in authority or your Human Resources representative, giving his/her job title underneath the signature.
- If you are self-employed, you should have a certified public accountant write a letter that includes all the same information listed in this section.
- If you are a homemaker, you will need to write a letter indicating that you do not work outside of the home. The stay-at-home parent must sign the letter.
- One letter for each adoptive parent per job is required. Examples of the letters are on the portal.
- Each letter must be notarized. **Your employer must notarize it, or you can use the True and Accurate cover sheet and have your signature notarized instead. Then you will send to your secretary of state for the apostille.**
- Examples for each type of employment letter are provided on the portal.

DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY OTHERS

Before You Complete the Employment Verification, please review the following list of information required. Each letter must include:

- Name of the employee (adoptive parent)
- Job title
- Profession
- Starting date
- Length of employment
- Annual salary
- Expected salary for the following year
- The statement "continued employment is expected"

DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY YOU

PANI FORM

This serves as the official application to PANI. It will introduce your file to the officials that will be reviewing your dossier and approving your request to adopt.

What You Need to Know:

- A form is provided for you on your family's portal. There is an English version for your reference but please submit the Spanish version. Please print it out and fill it out completely.
- Please use black ink and write as neatly as possible.
- Attach a passport photo to each parent application.

PANI REFLECTION SHEET-SPECIALIZED NEEDS CHECKLIST

This document will inform Costa Rica of your approved child parameters. Please share this with the social worker writing your home study so he/she can incorporate it into your study.

What You Need to Know:

- This form is provided for you on the portal.
- Complete this form with the specialized needs you are comfortable with. Please try to be consistent with the special needs you were approved for at your initial application.
- Your home study should ONLY include items from this list.
- Your special needs form should be signed by the parents.
- **Your approved parameters from this checklist must be an exact match (age, gender, and number of children) to the approved parameters in your psychological evaluation and home study.**

AGCI POST ADOPTION REPORT

- This form is provided for you on the portal. Only names and signatures are required.

DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY YOU

COMPLETE PASSPORT BOOK

What You Need to Know:

- You must copy every single page of your passport book, including empty ones. Then use the True and Accurate cover sheet to get notarized and then send to your secretary of state for the apostille.
- If you renew your passport during your adoption process, please email a new copy to your IAS.

PHOTOS OF FAMILY AND HOME

While you are working on your paperwork, you should be preparing photos of your family and home. You need to print photos for the dossier. These pictures will be used to give a visual impression of your family to the government officials who review your adoption case.

What You Need to Know:

- The pictures do not need to be professional photos, but should be clear snapshots of you, the things you enjoy doing, your home and your family.
- Include a photo of every room in the house including an exterior photo.
- You should be modestly dressed (no bathing suits please).
- You can print several photos to a page. They do not need to be in an album.
- Your photos should be sent to your international adoption specialist with your completed dossier.

HOW TO REQUEST AN FBI CHECK

Each adult over the age of 18 in the home must complete an FBI Identification Record (FBI clearance). FBI clearances are conducted through submitting fingerprints and can be done using ink-stamped cards or digital scanning. In some states, it is possible to obtain an FBI check through fingerprints submitted to the State Bureau of Investigation for your State Criminal Background Check. To find out if this is an option for your state, it is best to contact your home study social worker. Most often, an individual must request his/her own FBI check by following the instructions below. An FBI check cannot be requested by a third party (i.e., home study or adoption agency). The results will come from the FBI CJIS Division. For the home study, you can complete your FBI record check through any FBI-approved channeler. We suggest using:

<http://fieldprintusa.com/individuals>

DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY YOU

*Please note when scheduling an appointment, it should be for Individual use (NO CODE IS NEEDED) and tick NO to apostilled version. You are sending these results to Virginia for apostille after you get the results.

What You Will Receive:

No Record Response: Consists of a cover letter stating that "No Record" was found by the FBI. You will mail these results to VA for apostille. You will find the FBI cover letter and FBI check request form on the portal under the dossier tab.

Note: If you receive notification from the FBI that a record was found, please contact AGCI immediately!

USCIS

USCIS APPLICATION OVERVIEW

USCIS DEFINED:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services processes all incoming Hague Convention cases. The I800A approval from the USCIS gives your family permission to adopt internationally.

Convention Country Defined:

The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption (the Convention) entered into force with respect to the United States on April 1st, 2008. This Convention provides a framework for member countries to work together to ensure that children are provided with permanent, loving homes, that adoptions take place in the best interest of a child, and that the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children is prevented.

What You Need to Know:

- There are examples on the portal to help you fill out each document.
- Once you have completed your application and gathered all necessary documents, please send all documents to the address indicated in the "Instructions for Form I-800A" found at www.uscis.gov
- Determine who sends your completed home study to USCIS. Some states will allow you to send in your home study with your I-800A application, and others require that the home study agency sends the report directly to the USCIS office. Confirm with your social worker your state's process on filing your home study.
- Before you complete the USCIS application process: review the following list of requirements before you begin the application process. There are examples of the completed documents on the portal to reference as you fill out each form. There are also links to the forms needed on the portal. Once you have gathered all the documents/fees listed below, you will submit them to the USCIS office.
 - Cover Letter
 - I-800A Form
 - I-800A Supplement 1 - other adults in the home
 - I-800A Supplement 2 - release of information for AGCI
 - Supporting documents for criminal records
 - Photocopies of your Birth Certificates/Marriage License/Divorce Decree(s)/Death Certificate(s). If any of your certificates are in a foreign language, they must be officially translated before submitting them to USCIS. Please consult with your IAS.

USCIS

- Letter to the Department of Homeland Security - confirming photocopies are true and accurate copies
- G1145 - optional request for electronic notifications
- Check or money order for I-800A fee listed on USCIS website
- Notarized copy of your home study
- Approval Letter from AGCI stating that your home study was read and approved - only needed if your home study agency is not Hague accredited.

COVER LETTER

What You Need to Know:

- You will need to write a cover letter. See example on portal and edit accordingly for your family. This letter will accompany your application package and should indicate your adoptive country, the documents you are sending, and the fees you are including.

I-800A FORM

The I-800A form, Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country, initiates the immigration process for the child you intend to adopt from a Convention country. Form I-800A and supporting evidence are required for USCIS to determine your eligibility and suitability to adopt a child from a Convention country. This form can be downloaded at www.uscis.gov (click on immigration forms).

What You Need to Know:

- Type or print legibly in black ink when completing the I-800A form.
- If extra space is needed, attach a continuation sheet, indicate the part and the number of the item, and date and sign each sheet.
- I-800A is divided into parts 1 through 5, with two supplements. Supplement 1 must be completed if there are additional adult members living with you. Supplement 2 must be completed if you want to give consent to the USCIS to disclose information about your case to AGCI.
- If you answer "yes" to any of the questions concerning criminal background, please follow instructions given on the form I-800A precisely. If any of the requested additional information is missing, it could result in the denial of your petition. Documentation Regarding Criminal Record (remove if not applicable):

USCIS

- Certified copy of documentation showing final disposition of each incident which resulted in arrest, indictment, conviction, and/or any other judicial or administrative action for anyone subject to the home study and
- A written statement with the home study giving details, including any mitigating circumstances about each arrest, signed, under penalty of perjury, by the person to whom the arrest relates. Your signed statement must include the phrase “under penalty of perjury.”

Before You Complete your I-800A Form please use the example as a reference and contact your international adoption specialist if you need assistance.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

Your home study must match your I-800A form in the number of children, age range(s) and gender(s) you are planning to adopt. If you decide to request USCIS approval for two children, you must ensure that your social worker approves you and your home study for the adoption of “one or two” children. If these numbers do not match, USCIS will send you a Request for Evidence (RFE) delaying your approval.

COPIES OF BIRTH CERTIFICATES/MARRIAGE LICENSE/DIVORCE DECREE(S)/DEATH CERTIFICATE(S)

What You Need to Know:

- USCIS will accept photocopies of your birth certificates, marriage license, divorce decree(s), or death certificate (of deceased spouse), if you include the letter to the Department of Homeland Security (see below). If you choose to order and send originals of these documents, USCIS will not return them. If your certificates are in a foreign language they must be officially translated. Consult with your IAS.

LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

This letter states that your birth certificate, marriage license, divorce decree(s), or death certificate are exact copies of your original document and notarization will not be needed. This letter needs to be signed by both parents but does not require notarization.

USCIS

FEES

USCIS fees cover the costs of application and fingerprinting. You can find the fees here: [Fee Calculator \(uscis.gov\)](#)

What You Need to Know:

- Send one check. You need to send a check or money order for the fee listed on USCIS website. Make check payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- Children 18 years of age must be fingerprinted. If you have any children living in your home who are 18 years or older, they will have to be fingerprinted by USCIS as well. Refer to the USCIS website for any applicable fees.

HOME STUDY

For your home study, a licensed social worker, working through an AGCI cooperating agency, will assess your home environment and produce a home study report for use in the adoption process.

What You Need to Know:

- All USCIS applications require an original notarized copy of your home study. Refer to your home study agency if they are submitting this on your behalf. However, most families will submit their home study directly.
- You need to apply to the USCIS as soon as the home study is completed, due to the lengthy processing time of applications.

USCIS FINGERPRINTING

USCIS requires all families to complete additional fingerprints through one of their local offices. This is in addition to any fingerprinting completed for your home study or dossier.

What You Need to Know:

After you have filed your application with the USCIS, you will be notified of a date to appear for fingerprinting my mail. All fingerprinting is completed by appointment only. Once you have appeared for your fingerprinting appointment, the USCIS will send the prints to the FBI for processing.

USCIS

USCIS NOTICE OF APPROVAL

This letter notifies you that the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) has approved your application (I-800A) to adopt internationally.

What You Need to Know:

- You will receive the Notice of Approval after the USCIS receives your fingerprints. Once the USCIS receives the fingerprinting results and your file is complete, they will send you an approval called a Notice of Approval by mail.
- Please refer to the USCIS website for current processing timelines.
- Scan a copy to your international adoption specialist.
- Your Notice of Approval is good for 15 months from the date of completion of advance processing. Please note the expiration date on your Notice of Approval and plan to update at time of expiration. If you have any questions about how to reapply to the USCIS, please ask your IAS.
- The I800A approval letter will need to be notarized with the Notary Letter for NBC Notice of Approval on the portal and apostilled before including it in your dossier packet. If you live in NM or AR consult with your IAS before sending this to your secretary of state.

SUBMITTING YOUR DOSSIER

SUBMITTING THE DOSSIER

- Your IAS requires a scanned copy of each individual document for your dossier. Do not scan multiple documents into one item (i.e. medical, employment and FBI in one PDF).
- If any document is nearing or past the 12-month mark, you will be asked to redo that document.
- Please refer to your dossier checklist for the naming of each document.
- Please add your last name to each file name (ex. Jones_Passport copies).
- Please take special care to not remove any staples or apostille pages when scanning.
- Documents should be attached and sent to your IAS through email with proper file name. This may take several emails.
- Your IAS will review and approve your virtual dossier BEFORE you mail the documents in.
- Once approved by the IAS, please refer to dossier submission guidelines on the dossier checklist for the order in which the documents should be submitted.
- Your IAS will provide you the mailing address.

Congratulations! We know this was a lot of hard work. Now that the dossier is done you are one step closer to being a difference maker to a precious child. Thank you for standing up for this child now!