



# PHILIPPINES

## TRAVEL PACKET



# INTRODUCTION

Dear Family,

All God's Children International is pleased to assist you with travel arrangements for the adoption of your child(ren) from the Philippines! We ask that you thoroughly read this entire packet as each section is designed to give you a better idea of what to expect and how to plan for your trip.

Even though this packet mainly focuses on what to take to the Philippines and how to make plans for your trip, we also want to make sure that you are preparing your mindset for this trip.

Philippines is a wonderful country, and the people are welcoming and honored to have you visit. You will encounter very different, and sometimes challenging, conditions in the Philippines. Keep in mind that even if certain aspects of travel in the Philippines are difficult, you are in a different culture, so you'll need to be flexible and aware of those differences.

We pray that you will be greatly blessed as you begin this step of your adoption process. May your trip to the Philippines be a memorable and wonderful experience!

Blessings,

AGCI Philippines Adoption Team

**"Yes, my soul, find rest in God;  
my hope comes from Him."**

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Document templates and examples are located on the family portal.

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



# 1. PREPARING TO TRAVEL



**"Be strong and take heart, all  
you who hope in the Lord."**

PSALM 31:24

# 1. PREPARING TO TRAVEL

## SECTION CHECKLIST

- Airline Reservations
- Accommodations

### a. Airline Reservations

#### What You Need to Know

1. **Choosing a travel agent is an individual choice.** We can only provide information to start you on your search by listing those agencies most commonly used by families and found to offer good fares. AGCI cannot guarantee that the agency we recommend offers the lowest prices.
2. **If you do not want to use a travel agent, you may also try calling the airlines directly;** however, we have been told by many families that purchasing tickets from agents who offer wholesale or bulk seat pricing is better. Some airlines advertise "adoption rates." Please feel free to check this out; however, most families have found that the adoption rate is calculated by taking the full fare price and cutting it in half. This is usually not the cheapest ticket available. Many wholesalers offer better than 50% off the full fare price.
3. **If you intend to use frequent flier miles,** you need to understand that your flight options may be limited. If you are unable to use your frequent flier miles for the dates that we give you, you may either choose to purchase tickets and keep the schedule, or be rescheduled out several weeks to the next available travel space that coincides with your frequent flier miles.
4. **If you need to travel domestically in the Philippines,** it is likely that you will be using a different airline for that travel. Please make sure that you understand the domestic airline's baggage weight restrictions before your departure as it will be different from international airline you used. It is likely that you will need to pay for extra weight for your baggage.

#### Suggested Agencies

##### **Adoption Airfare LLC**

[www.adoptionairfare.com](http://www.adoptionairfare.com)

Tabitha Lovell

1673 Independence Ridge

Breeding, KY 42715

Direct Line: 800-277-7651x801

Cell: 209-247-0740

Fax: 800-277-7651

## What You Need to Ask

When booking tickets, please keep in mind the following questions so that you are fully informed about airline policy and your own travel circumstances:

1. **How many people are flying to and from the Philippines?** On your return flight you will need to buy an additional seat for your adopted child(ren).
2. **Book an extra seat for an active or older child (return flight).** We have found that parents who adopt a child who is mobile (i.e., walking) benefit greatly from purchasing an extra seat for their child on each leg of the trip. It may be exhausting and uncomfortable to make a long flight with a child who is active on your lap.
3. **There are bassinets that are first come, first served for infants.** Talk to your travel agent about this and, if possible, request a bulk head or aisle seat with this option.
4. **What costs are incurred if we change our tickets (even if they are for adoption)?** How many days in advance must we notify our airline before any penalty is incurred?
5. **Are there any discounts for adoption?** If so, what are the discounted prices based upon (full fare)?
6. **What is the phone number to call if we must change our tickets?** Give this number to your international adoption specialist as well.
7. **Do we have any frequent flier miles** or other travel benefit we may use on the domestic or international leg of the trip? If you do choose to use frequent flier miles, this could limit your choices of flights, but is definitely a benefit worth looking into.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

1. **It is important to not book your tickets until you are given a specific travel date by AGCI.** In the past, families have booked tickets without their travel date and have lost a considerable amount of money when they learn that they cannot leave on the day they had scheduled. Although the urge to purchase your tickets will be very strong or your travel agent may be pushing you to commit, please do not book your tickets until we have confirmed your exact date.

## Philippines Trip Form

Once you have booked your tickets, we ask that you please forward AGCI your Philippines Trip Form (located on the family portal) and your complete itinerary, including your domestic flights. AGCI will forward this information to NACC so they are able to prepare for your arrival.

**Tiana Wolfley, International Adoption Specialist**

**Email:** [twolfley@allgodschildren.org](mailto:twolfley@allgodschildren.org)

**Phone:** (360) 823-9389

## Passport

Before you leave for the Philippines, make two notarized copies of your passport. Leave one copy at home with a friend or relative who would be able to Federal Express it to you in Manila in the event that your original passport and copy are lost in the Philippines. Keep the other notarized copy separate from your original passport, and keep it with you at all times. If you lose your passport, contact the Philippines Embassy immediately, through your coordinators.

**NOTE:** Check with a local travel clinic or your doctor for immunization requirements for travel to the Philippines.

## **b. Accommodations**

### **Hotels**

Travel dates and itineraries are flexible and there is no requirement for where you must stay while in the Philippines. You can determine how much time you want to spend in Manila and we recommend taking time to research different areas of the city. Here are a few suggestions:

- Intramuros: A more historical area of Manila containing parks, museums and monuments.
- Makati City: A bustling area of shopping, restaurants and museums.
- Near NACC: You will have one required meeting at NACC.
- Close to the Airport: If you have early flights this might be helpful.

You can book your own hotel accommodations in the Philippines. Check out the list of hotels by area on the family portal.

Please identify the hotel you want to book before you receive your invitation to travel.

### **What You Need to Know**

- Be sure to carry your hotel's name, address and phone number at all times.
- It is likely that you can pay for your hotel in Manila with a credit card. For anything outside of Manila expect to pay with cash.



## 2. TRAVEL TIPS



**"Guide me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Savior, and my hope is in You all day long."**



# 2. TRAVEL TIPS

## SECTION CHECKLIST

- Understanding the Basics
- What to Pack
- Money
- Gifts and Donation Ideas
- Important Contacts

### a. Understanding the Basics

#### Things to Remember in the Philippines

- They speak English in most places in the Philippines and anywhere you go in Manila.
- The phrase “Assume nothing” will keep you vigilant and your sense of humor intact.
- You are in a foreign country with foreign rules.
- Manila is a big city with big city problems. Be street smart and keep your eyes wide open while walking around. AGCI recommends you stay in populated areas and do not walk around at night.
- Philippines drivers follow a different set of rules.
- Orphanages are institutions with schedules like hospitals and boarding schools. There are specific times that you will be able to visit the orphanages and other times when you cannot.
- The orphanage personnel are professionals, and it is their job to enforce orphanage policy.
- Don't be afraid to speak up! The only way a problem or concern of yours can be fixed is to tell your social worker at NACC or your AGCI international adoption specialist. They are there to help you through at every step, including those unforeseen problems that may occur along the way.
- If you ask your travel guide to dinner, or you are invited for an outing by any of the people involved in your travel (interpreter, driver, coordinator), please be prepared to pay for their meals. This may be a shock to you since you may be “invited.” If you choose to go, you will find socializing with the people of the Philippines and experiencing their culture is wonderful.
- Remember you are not going on a vacation or tour; you are going to your child(ren)'s birth country to complete your adoption.
- Since your trip is not a vacation or tour, entertainment is not provided for the “down time” in your hotel. Please bring books, games, cards, toys and other forms of entertainment for you and your child(ren).
- It is recommended to take melatonin to help adjust your sleep to the time change.
- Do not drink the water from the tap—please only drink bottled water.
- You will need a plug adapter (you can buy an inexpensive adapter plug/converter kit at Walmart).

### b. What to Pack

Undoubtedly, you will find packing for the Philippines a real challenge. There are many items to remember, including toys and clothes for your child(ren), numerous medicines for ailments that you may or may not get, and your own clothing and travel items. You will probably have to pack and repack several times before getting

everything to fit. We advise that you carry anything valuable in your carry-on luggage. It is also wise to spread your clothes and your child(ren)'s around in different suitcases, in case of loss or theft of a piece or pieces of luggage. To make it easier, please refer to the list on the following page.

### **Clothes**

You should plan to dress as you would at home (except for warmer weather if you live in cooler parts of the country), but please plan to bring slightly nicer clothing (jeans, khakis, and a nicer shirt is fine) for the day you go to the NACC—shorts are not acceptable.

Philippines is a casual country, but clothes should not be revealing or skimpy. Women can wear modest dresses/skirts/pants/capris, and men can wear shorts. Spaghetti-strapped tank tops are not acceptable. Sweat pants and jogging outfits are NOT appropriate attire. The humidity is significant, especially in the warmer months, so be prepared to dress in lightweight clothing. It is advised to bring a sweater as hotels and most buildings are kept very cool with air-conditioning.

### **General Traveling Essentials**

- Backpack
- Ziploc bags
- Hand sanitizer
- Converter: Electricity is 220v (European style two pin plug)
- Toiletries
- Flashlight
- Photo book of your family
- Extra glasses, contact lenses and solution
- Notebook, journal and pens to record "firsts" for your child(ren)
- Camera/Video camera (bring all camera accessories, including memory cards, film and batteries)
- Snacks
- Comfortable shoes or sandals
- Hats or sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Toys and entertainment for your child(ren)
- Water bottle

### **Clothes and Undergarments for Your Child(ren)**

When you receive your child, you will need to plan to dress them from undergarments to outer garments. Some orphanages will need you to have a full set of clothes, including underwear, to change your child into because the orphanage will want to keep your child's clothing for the other children. Other orphanages will let you take your child in the clothing that they come in. Regarding undergarments, children ages 0 to 3 will wear diapers, children ages 3 to 4 will wear pull-ups, and children ages 5 and older should be potty-trained. As you pack for your child, keep in mind that too big is better than too small.

**Health Aids (Optional)**

If you have any health issues, be sure to bring any medication that you may need in your carry-on (if it is not a liquid).

- Tums
- Pain reliever (Advil, Tylenol, Excedrin, etc.)
- First-aid kit
- Dramamine
- Over-the-counter antibiotic ointment, such as Polysporin

**Snacks (Optional)**

- Crackers
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruits, nuts
- Granola bars
- Candy, cookies
- Jerky

**c. Money**

You will find that you are going to carry a large amount of money to Philippines with you. This is going to cover your travel expenses, as well as adoption expenses and anything extra.

**Money Exchange**

There are certain areas in Manila that will accept U.S. dollars, but not everywhere. You can exchange U.S. dollars in the Manila airport, but most hotels will also exchange bills for you. Check exchange rates before leaving the U.S. When you exchange money, the bills should be in varying denominations of \$20s, \$50s and \$100s.

Credit cards are accepted at most shops and restaurants in Manila. If you plan to withdraw cash on your credit card while in Manila, check with your credit card company before traveling to the Philippines to ensure that your card is set up for international cash withdrawal.

**Protecting your assets:**

- Inform your bank and credit card company of when and where you are traveling; otherwise, they may lock your account due to suspicious activity.
- As in every city, there are pickpockets. Carry your cash, credit cards and passport in a money belt, neck wallet or similar.

**d. Gift and Donation Ideas****Gifts**

Take small gifts for the director of the orphanage your child is in, the orphanage social worker who assists you, and for six to eight caretakers at the orphanage. You may throw in some extras just in case, e.g., if you hire a driver for the week. (Though a tip for a driver is a good gift!) Typical "hostess gifts" such as bath soaps, lotions, scarves, hair accessories, candy/chocolate, t-shirts, locally made items, calendars, etc., are appropriate.

**You are not to give any gift to the NACC representatives.**

**Families are encouraged to bring gifts for the following people:**

- Orphanage director
- Social worker
- Caregivers



## 3. YOUR TRIP



**"Come near to God and He  
will come near to you."**

**JAMES 4:8**

# 3. YOUR TRIP

## SECTION CHECKLIST

- Required Documents
- Trip Itinerary
- Meeting Your Child
- First Days with Your Child In-Country
- Travel Expenses

### a. Required Documents

#### Documents for Travel

- Copy of your I-800A approval
- Notarized copies of your passports
- Copy of your home study

### b. Trip Itinerary

NACC will email AGCI your invitation to travel and a proposed itinerary. This proposed itinerary will be a very basic outline for your trip—this itinerary is flexible and additional days can be added. Your trip can not be shorter than the proposed itinerary. The NACC allows a family 20 days from the receipt of their invitation to make their arrangements and arrive in Manila. The following is a sample itinerary:

#### Day 1 | Arrival of Adoptive Family

#### Day 2 | Travel to Orphanage City

This is where the official entrustment of the child to your family will occur.

#### Days 3–5 | Bonding Time

This is your family's opportunity to spend quality time with their child and start to adjust to one another. Take lots of photos of the orphanage and the surrounding area. Be sure to ask the orphanage first before taking photos of children or the facility. Be sure to talk to the orphanage director and ask any questions you may have about your child.

- When did my child enter the orphanage and where was he/she before that?
- Do you have any additional information about my child's birth parents and family history?
- Have any relatives visited my child since placement in the orphanage?

**NOTE:** Some orphanages will require a family to spend the first few days bonding with the child in the orphanage. They will not allow you to take the child to your hotel. They feel this will allow the child more time to become comfortable with you before removing them from their environment. This is up to the discretion and protocol of the orphanage.

When you visit the orphanage, you will be required to give the orphanage donation of \$1,000. This must be paid by cashier's check and given directly to the director of the orphanage. This is an important gesture and gives you an opportunity to really thank the orphanage director for everything they did to care for your child.

#### Day 6 | Pre-departure Visit at the NACC

Your family will travel to the NACC office, where the visa and all travel documents of the child will be endorsed to you. Your family will be given the opportunity to share your experience in caring for the child or to ask questions to the NACC secretariat. This appointment is in an office with very few items to entertain your child. Please bring toys, books, etc. to help keep them occupied while you are filling out paperwork and answering questions. You will be given your child's travel documents as well as paperwork for the finalization and readoption process after the 8-month post-placement report. You may want to bring a folder and/or a waterproof bag to carry these documents in, especially if you are in the country during the rainy season.

NACC may ask you to write a letter to your child in the future, in the event your child contacts them after they are 18 to research their history or birth parents. NACC will keep this letter from you in your child's file at their office.

#### Day 7 | Return to U.S.

You will depart and return home.

### c. Meeting Your Child

Many parents have high expectations of this meeting, and it is important for you to be realistic and patient with yourselves and your child. This will be an emotional and overwhelming time for you as parents. Please remember to take time and allow your child to warm up to you. Below are a few suggestions that you may want to consider:

- **Bring toys and snacks for your child.** You may want to pick one special item for your child, such as a stuffed animal or a blanket, and embroider his/her name on it. If you bring more than one toy, realize that it may become community property once you leave the orphanage. If you plan to bring snacks for your child, please be sensitive to other children. You may want to bring enough to share.
- **Bring a photo album of your family.** If your child is old enough, you may want to bring pictures from home to share with your child. It will be a great icebreaker to look at pictures and interact with your child.
- **Do not be afraid to hug, kiss, and show affection to your child.** Take this opportunity to show your love in a tangible way, once your child has warmed up to you.
- **Realize that the orphanage is on a schedule and you may need to work around meals and nap times.** It will depend on the flexibility of the orphanage, and the availability of space, as to how much privacy you will receive. Please be patient and remain flexible with the orphanage director and staff.
- **Remember that many children have had little to no contact with men.** This can affect children in different ways. Sometimes children will gravitate towards the father because they look at their new mom like a caregiving nurse. Other times children are afraid of the father and will only warm up initially to the mother. Whatever the case is with your child, please realize that this is a normal response, and that once your child is home they will learn what it is like to be a family and have a mom and a dad.

- **For older children:** Bring toys to play with your kids (stickers, coloring, tattoos, instruments, Nerf balls, etc.)
- **Please feel free to call the office and speak with AGCI staff** about any questions or concerns that you may have.

#### **d. First Days with Your Child In-Country**

It is common for parents to experience a great deal of anxiety when finally left alone with their child in the hotel. Be patient with yourselves and be patient with your child. Above all, be prepared for anything. Please read the "Adjustment Period" section of this packet, and also feel free to consult with your international adoption specialist if you are feeling overwhelmed.

You may find communication with toddlers and older children difficult but be creative—charades works wonderfully! Prepare a picture book before your trip with the basic essentials labeled, so you can point to things like brushing your teeth, the toilet, going to sleep, and eating food. Sometimes children adapt quickly to leaving the orphanage, and other times it can be a struggle. Common behaviors can be rocking, banging their head, hitting themselves, tantrums and biting. Often, children are afraid of taking a bath. To prepare for this, some families have brought swimming suits and gotten into the bathtub with their child and this has helped their child realize that a bath does not have to be scary and can actually be fun! They splash and play with toys and soon fears are gone. It is extremely important to not over-stimulate your child, both while in the Philippines, and when first arriving home. Literally, everything is now a first for your child, and too many things at once will make your child anxious, and may exacerbate some of the behaviors listed above. Please do not plan on seeing every sight in town after you have your child. Going a few places and seeing a few things is fine, but be sensitive to your child's reactions, and be prepared to spend time alone together in the hotel or apartment. If you want to do a great deal of sightseeing and shopping, it is a good idea to arrive to the Philippines early, and not on the way home with your child.

AGCI staff will schedule a call with you prior to your trip to prepare you for what is ahead.



## e. Travel Expenses

The following table provides a list of the expenses you will incur on your trip to the Philippines. Costs will vary depending on the region to which you are traveling in the Philippines.

Description	Fee (U.S. dollars)
<b>Airfare</b>	
Round-trip	<b>\$1,000–2,500 per person</b>
Domestic flights to orphanage city	<b>\$200–500 per person</b>
<b>Lodging</b>	
In Manila: Hotel (cash or credit card)	<b>\$100–200 per night + tax</b>
In your child's city: Hotel (cash)	<b>\$70–100 per night + tax</b>
<i>You will spend 3–4 nights in the city where your child's orphanage is located. For hotel recommendation, please contact AGCI staff.</i>	
<b>Food</b>	
Hotel: \$35 a day, per person	<b>\$35–60 per day, per person</b>
Restaurants: \$20 a day, per person	



## 4. THE ADJUSTMENT PERIOD



**"For great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord."**

# 4. THE ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

## SECTION CHECKLIST

- Bonding and Attachment
- Establish a Schedule
- Behaviors to Expect from Your Child
- Keep AGCI Informed
- Keep Your Home Study Current Through Finalization

### a. Bonding and Attachment

This is an exciting and wonderful time as your new family begins! There are some things that parents need to keep in mind in these first few days, weeks, and months. It is important that expectations are kept realistic and that your new family is allowed time to form as you get to know each other. As preparation, we recommend you read the books *Raising Adopted Children* and *20 Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*, focusing primarily on the chapters about adjustment. Chapter 2 "Adjustment of the Family" in *Raising Adopted Children* is particularly informative.

#### **Cocooning**

It is important to explain to family and friends before you travel that they may see you at the airport to welcome you home, but that you do not plan on having or attending any large parties or get-togethers for at least a month. Your child needs time alone with your immediate nuclear family to begin the bonding process. Going to busy public places and interacting with many other adults and children will only slow the bonding process. Your child needs to understand that you are his/her parents and also learn what a family really is.

"Cocooning" with your child for 90 days or more is often very helpful in forming a good initial bond and attachment. The child needs to have time to explore the new home environment and to get to know you and any other siblings in the home. I would recommend that you limit the amount of time that family members and friends spend with your child. Treat him/her like a hospital patient at first and limit visits to five to ten minutes. Going to McDonald's for a Happy Meal may seem like a good idea; however, I would suggest that you avoid those activities (maybe even going to church for a while) until your child has settled into a comfortable routine. To avoid indiscriminate affection and to help your child bond with you, I would also recommend that you don't let others (except for grandparents) pick up and hold your child. As much as possible, I would also suggest those visits occur in your own home.

Many times, families with babies under 12 months do not feel that cocooning is as necessary due to the age. However, please keep in mind even with birthing a baby, mothers cocoon those first weeks at home. God designed the birthing process for mothers to recuperate, and therefore stay close to home, those first weeks out of the hospital. The same process is crucial for the adoptive family to make the proper bonds with their child.

### **“Baby Blues”**

It is of great importance to prepare yourself for the possibility that you might not bond or attach to your child immediately upon receiving him/her. Even though you have bonded to your child through your visit to the Philippines and the pictures and videos over the last months, actually feeding, changing, and incorporating your child into your daily life and routine might not be what you imagined. Some families have experienced severe “baby blues” upon bringing their child home. They have felt like a “caretaker” and not the mother that they imagined. Getting used to the baby’s smells, personality, and spirit may take more time for some than others.

Please note that even when birthing a child, many mothers have experienced these same issues. Bonding and attaching to a child, whether through birth or adoption, can take many months. The amount of love you have the first time you see your child’s face and hold their little body will be tripled three months later. Every day spent with your child deepens this bond and attachment. Remember, you are not a bad parent, no matter how you may feel at any given moment. Time, patience, prayer, and rest will do wonders for you once you are home, safe and sound with your child. Give yourself a break and remember that you have been in a foreign country, with different foods, different time zones, and you are jet lagged, not to mention emotionally spent with the thrill of finally having your child in your arms!

Please keep in mind that bonding is not immediate; it will take time. Children often experience a period of disequilibrium. This is very normal, and a lot of parenting is guesswork trying to figure out how to help your child, as well as yourself, cope with all of the changes that you are experiencing. The two most important building blocks to bonding are safety and security. Your child will be exploring the new environment and testing you as he/(s)he learns to trust. It is also normal for children to experience anxiety when they hear a change in language. Even younger infants may be scared and cry because they do not recognize English or miss hearing their native language. The sound of different voices, smells, and lack of infant cries may be unsettling for them.

Below is a question and answer excerpted from the book *What to Expect the First Year*, by Arlene Eisenberg. You may want to check it out from the library and read the chapter on the adopted baby. There are several sections to help you understand some feelings you may be having once you get home.

### **Not Feeling Like a Parent**

*“Not having gone through pregnancy and childbirth, holding a child born to someone else, I don’t feel much like a mother to our adopted son and I am afraid I never will.”*

You don’t have to be an adoptive mother to have trouble adapting to the role of mother. Most first-time mothers experience the very same self-doubts as they hold their newborns. Becoming a mother does not begin with conception and culminate in the moments directly after birth; motherhood evolves over the course of days, weeks, months, and years of loving and caring. Though many women don’t feel like mothers during those first challenging days, virtually all do eventually.

Still, while you are struggling to reach that point you may, like many adoptive parents, wish that you could somehow erase the fact of the adoption. And then presto! You would feel like a parent. But biological closeness doesn’t guarantee emotional closeness, and though as an adoptive parent you may have a hard time accepting yourself as a mother, your baby will have no such difficulty. You—who love, (s)helter, and provide for all this child’s needs—are the real thing to this baby boy or girl. And you’ll know that long before you hear that first “mama” or “dada.”

Do keep in mind, however, that all babies are not created equally affectionate. Some tend not to be cuddly and don't enjoy being touched a lot (see page 156), but this has nothing to do with what their parents do or don't do. If you have such a baby, don't blame yourself or the fact that your baby is adopted.

## **b. Establish a Schedule**

In addition to working at bonding and attachment, there are several other factors that may have an effect on how well your child adapts to his/her new environment. The most common subjects mentioned are daily routine, sleeping patterns, and feeding habits. Choosing to approach these issues with your child in a healthy manner can greatly contribute to your child's adaptation and sense of belonging in your family.

### **Routine**

Most children thrive on routine and schedule. Request a written copy of your child's daily routine and schedule from the orphanage. It is important to stick as close to this schedule as possible for the first days with your child to provide a sense of normalcy. Maintaining this schedule will help with overall transition in becoming a part of your family. Once you are home and have had ample time with your child, you can then begin to make necessary adjustments to this routine as you both get accustomed to life together.

You may also want to limit the amount of toys given to your child in the beginning. First of all, your child will be more interested in exploring his/her new surroundings and bonding with you, than in playing with toys. Overwhelming your child with too many things at once can do more harm than good. You will want to have two to three toys that your child can learn to play with, and then introduce new things gradually; maybe then you can remove toys that seem less interesting to your child.

### **Sleeping**

Many children experience irregular sleep habits due to the change in environment and the time change from the Philippines to the U.S. It is sometimes a good idea to sleep with your child if he/(s)he is experiencing difficulty with going to bed or is having night traumas. Your presence will be soothing, as well as help to provide a sense of security, assuring your child that you will be there for him/her whenever he/(s)he needs you.

### **Feeding**

Some parents encounter feeding issues with their child after they arrive home. This is due to the change in his/her diet from Philippines smells and tastes, to those they experience when they come to the U.S. At first, you may need to imitate the diet that your child is accustomed to in the orphanage. Good choices include bland foods, such as yogurt, fruit, vegetables, pastas, breads, and potatoes. It is a good idea to gradually introduce new foods, so as to not overwhelm your child. Your child is also not used to eating a lot of meat, and will most likely not be interested in eating at McDonalds or Burger King. It is common for children to hoard food in the beginning and not be able to regulate food intake on their own. Some children will eat non-stop unless regulated.

Many children tend to have allergies to milk, so be sure to watch for abnormal reactions to dairy products. Some children may just not enjoy drinking milk, so you may want to try sweetening it with Ovaltine. Calcium and other vitamin supplements should be considered if dairy is not able to be a part of your child's diet. Another good alternative to use for protein intake, in addition to a regular diet, is the meal supplement drink, Ensure.

### Language

Talk to your child a lot. Listening to you is how he/(s)he will begin to learn English. Talking, talking, and more talking is the key to your child slowly recognizing what you are saying. Each child is different in how quickly they will feel comfortable in speaking. Your child will need to completely understand you before having enough confidence to speak himself/herself. If you are adopting more than one child, sometimes it takes a little longer for each child to speak English, because they have each other to lean on in speaking their native language; the need to speak English may not be as great as it would be for a child without a native language-speaking sibling.

### Developmental Delay

Be prepared that your child will be developmentally delayed. On the average, children are developmentally delayed one month for every three months they spend in an orphanage. The delay may be more pronounced in certain areas of development and more age-appropriate in others. Typical areas of delay include fine motor skills, speech, and independent play. These are normal, typical behaviors to expect from children who have been under institutional care.

## c. Behaviors to Expect from Your Child

In speaking with families over the last few years, we have compiled some important general information for families to be aware of when adopting children who have been institutionalized. These are general observations and they may or may not apply to your adoptive child.

It's important that you try to understand what your child is experiencing from your child's point of view:

1. The child has already experienced trauma in his/her life through abandonment. (S)he experiences grief and loss, not only from being separated from biological parent(s), but also from the staff at one or more orphanages, and/or a foster care family. While (s)he may have received indifferent care from the staff, (s)he nevertheless has formed a level of trust because his/her basic needs have been met.
2. The child is leaving a relatively "safe and secure" environment for the unknown. (S)he is leaving that environment with "strangers." Who are you? Can (s)he trust you? Will you meet his/her basic needs? Will you abandon him/her like others have done? Will you "give up" on him/her if (s)he doesn't meet your expectations medically, social, physically, or developmentally? Will (s)he have to do something to "earn" your love? Are you just some intermediary to some unknown destination over which (s)he has no control? Can you love him/her unconditionally? Institutionalized children are intuitively aware that something is "broken" and they don't know how to fix it.
3. To protect themselves from any further hurt, trauma, and grief, older children develop a number of self-protecting and self-soothing mechanisms, which may include but are not limited to:
  - Thumb-sucking
  - Temper tantrums/long cries
  - Biting, scratching, kicking others
  - Interrupted sleep/night terrors
  - Focus on food/seemingly insatiable
  - Bed-wetting

- Zoning out (staring off into space)
- Clinginess

Your child may develop these behaviors in order to have some “control” over a small area in his/her life when so much is totally out of his/her control. The more understanding you can be to your child’s background and to what (s)he may be feeling, the better his/her adjustment will be. Show your child in every way possible that you will never leave him/her, and that you will love him/her unconditionally, no matter what.

4. The adopted child has come from a sensory deprived institutional environment. (S)he does not receive the type of neurological and physiological stimulation that should be the birthright of every child. Therefore, (s) he is usually developmentally delayed in one or more of the following areas:

- Gross motor skills
- Fine motor skills
- Expressive language
- Receptive language
- Social integration
- Sensory integration

Be aware that many well-meaning family members, friends and associates will not understand that your child is developmentally delayed. You may hear comments that suggest your child is not acting in an age-appropriate manner. Moreover, your child may need the assistance of a speech, occupational, or other professional therapist. It is not unusual for four- to six-year-olds not to be able to use crayons and scissors, or to know how to play with a toy.

5. Unfortunately, most adopted children from an institutionalized setting have received very little affection, including hugging, cuddling, and rocking. The child’s lack of experiencing affection does not mean that (s) he does not want it. However, (s)he may find it difficult at first to receive your affection. It also may take some time for him/her to initiate gestures of affection toward you. It is not unusual for even an older child to be very uncomfortable with affectionate gestures. Just because (s)he hasn’t experienced it, doesn’t mean (s)he doesn’t need it! You can’t give your new child enough affection.
6. Overstimulation leads to a variety of “acting out” behaviors, including those mentioned earlier. Be aware that your child has come from a very under-stimulating environment. When your child leaves the institutional setting, (s)he experiences what the adoption community calls the “Disneyland Affect.” The child is bombarded with a whole new set of sensory experiences that can be very challenging for him/her to process. (S)he needs space, time, and patience. If your child is acting out, a good question to always ask yourself is, “Has our schedule or routine or anything else changed in the last 72 hours?” Often this is a very important clue to a child’s current behavior. Also remember that every child, whether adopted or not, goes through normal periods of disequilibrium that can last for hours, days, or months. A child going through puberty or early adolescence would be an example of that.
7. It is vitally important that your child have a full blood work-up in consultation with your pediatrician, because the medical information given to the placing agency and the adoptive family can be incorrect or incomplete. It is not unusual for a medical problem to go undiagnosed by physicians in these countries just because their diagnostic tools are dated. Rechecking for things like anemia, lead poisoning, intestinal parasites, Hepatitis B

and sexually transmitted diseases, can help families intervene early if there are undetected health problems. An early developmental assessment by a qualified developmental specialist through your school district, or privately, can also give you a more accurate picture of where your child is in relation to age-appropriate developmental markers.