

# 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

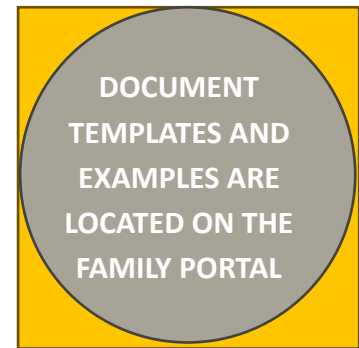
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# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

## 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 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.

## 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

Follow these simple steps for submitting your dossier:

- Put all documents in order according to the dossier submission guidelines on the dossier checklist.
- Make one full virtual photocopy of your entire dossier, including copies of the notary page. Please keep one copy of the dossier for your records.
- Send the original dossier and the virtual photocopy to AGCI. The original dossier and the virtual photocopy of the dossier will be sent to NACC upon submission.

# 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 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.

# NOTARIZATION PROCESS

## 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>

# NOTARIZATION PROCESS

- 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.

## 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.



# 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 the Philippines these may include medical evaluations, criminal background checks, reference letters, ordering marriage and birth certificates, etc.

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 agency off the Cooperating Agency List 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. Adoptions in the Philippines are finalized after your child(ren) enter the U.S. Your home study must stay current through the final adoption of your child(ren).

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 of 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.
- 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, if applicable, must match your approved parameters in your home study. Your USCIS application must match your home study for the number 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

## 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 you were born outside of the United States, you will need to obtain a certified 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.

## 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 FAQ's: [http://travel.state.gov/passport\\_easy.html](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:

# DOCUMENTS TO ORDER

- 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.

# 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:

- The medical form must be completely filled in, signed, and notarized by your doctor.
- 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:

- 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.
- 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.

## MEDICAL STATEMENT(S) FOR CHILDREN

A doctor must write a statement for each child in the home stating that the child is free from communicable disease and is in good health.

### What You Need to Know:

- Only one statement is required but must reference all the children in the home by name and birth date.
- The statement must also include that the doctor will extend their services to an adopted child.
- The statement must be on doctor's letter and signed and notarized.

## 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.

### What You Need to Know:

# DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY OTHERS

- The evaluation must be completed by a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist.
- MMPI-2RF and NEO-PI-R or 16 PF Questionnaire are required.
- The evaluation must include the baseline and t-scores.
- One report is required for each parent.
- The evaluation should be printed on letterhead, signed, and notarized by the psychologist who performed your evaluation.
- The psychologist should be adoption competent.

## CRIMINAL CHECK

A criminal check states that you are clear from any past criminal history. One is required for each parent and anyone 18 or older in the home. This is different than the USCIS fingerprint requirement.

### What You Need to Know:

- You can use either a local, county or state criminal check. You can go to your local, county or state police station to complete this criminal check.
- Some local offices do fingerprinting; others do a name check on the computer. Either process is fine; you just need a letter that states that you are clear from any past criminal activity.
- The letter must bear the police department seal or be on police letterhead.
- The criminal check must be notarized.

### What You Need to Ask:

You can check with your home study agency to see if you can get the original criminal check clearance letter that they require. Some agencies can give you the original and they keep a copy for themselves; others have county or state policies that do not allow them to do so.

## 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.

# DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY OTHERS

- 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. Templates of the letters are on the portal.
- Each letter must be notarized. It is the individual signing the letter whose signature is notarized.

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"

## CHARACTER REFERENCE LETTERS

These letters recommend you as good candidates for adoptive parents and are written by people who know you well. These are different and separate from the home study references. They can be some of the same people but do have different requirements. We recommend that you ask for letters of recommendation only from people who have known you for at least 5 years.

### What You Need to Know:

- You need to obtain a letter from the following people:
- An employer who has known you for at least five years. If you have not known your employer for five years, you will need an additional letter from a past employer for a combined total of five years of references. For example, if you have known your current employer for two years, you need to obtain a second reference letter from a past employer who has known you for at least three years. These letters should include a description of the adoptive parents' work ethics, relationships with superiors, co- employees and subordinates, and performance level.



# DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY OTHERS

- A pastor who has known you for at least five years. A second letter is required if you have not known the pastor that long. Same as above.
- From a friend (not a family member) who has known you for five years. A second letter is required if you have not known the friend that long. Same as above.
- Each typed letter must be between half a page and a full page in length, single spaced in standard sized font.
- Address each letter: "To Whom It May Concern" and do not include contact information for AGCI or your home study agency. It is also best that the writer's contact information is not included.
- Statement of relationship to your family. Each letter must clearly state the relationship between you and the person(s) writing the letter as well as the length of time you have known them.
- Legal names. The writer(s) must use your legal names. For example, if your legal name is Robert but most people call you Bob, your letters must refer to yourself as Robert.
- Required statements. Each letter must state that you and your spouse are recommended for an adoption of a child, that you will make excellent parents, and that you will provide a loving home with high moral standards.
- Respect of other cultures and faiths. It is important that each letter is written in a manner that is respectful of other cultures and faiths and does not speak negatively about a country's "orphan crisis."
- Notarization is required. Each of these letters must be notarized. It is highly recommended that you provide your reference individuals with the notary information and requirements outlined in Section 1 of the packet.

Note: There must be at least 5 total letters. If both parents are employed, the letters should include two employment letters, one pastor letter, and two friend letters. If only one parent is employed, the fifth letter should be from a person that can speak about the other parent in a volunteer, or similar working capacity.

## WRITTEN CONSENT FROM CHILDREN

This letter is from each child over the age of 10 living in or outside your home, to express their consent to the adoption.

### What You Need to Know:

- Each child in your home over the age of 10, and/or any children living outside of the home must write a letter of consent to the adoption.

# DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY OTHERS

- Each letter only needs to be a few sentences long, expressing the child's consent to the adoption.
- Address each letter: "To Whom It May Concern" and do not include contact information for AGCI or your home study agency. It is also best that the writer's contact information is not included
- Notarization is required. Each of these letters must be notarized with the child's signature.

## GUARDIAN LETTER

This letter is from guardians you chose for your adopted children expressing consent and acceptance of this responsibility.

### What You Need to Know:

- The letter does not need to be more than a paragraph or two but must include background information on the guardians e.g. age, health, occupation, address, and relationship to the adoptive parents.
- Please choose a couple in similar age to you. NACC will not accept your parents as guardians.
- This letter needs to be signed by both people.
- The letter must state that the guardian will welcome a Filipino child in their home if need be.
- Address each letter: "To Whom It May Concern."
- Notarization is required.

# DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY YOU

## NACC APPLICATION FORM

The NACC adoption form serves as your dossier's cover letter to the NACC. 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. Please print it out and fill it out completely.
- Only one form needs to be completed per family. Please use black ink and write as neatly as possible.
- Your NACC adoption form should be signed and notarized.

## OATH AND UNDERTAKING

This is a form verifying that all the information provided by the adoptive parents is true and accurate information.

### What You Need to Know

- The form is located on the portal.
- The form must be notarized with both parent's signatures.
- If you have an official match, you must also fill out the child specific oath and undertaking.

## NACC SELF-REPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a form created by the NACC to get more detailed and personal information from the adoptive parents.

### What You Need to Know:

- A self-report must be completed by each adoptive parent.
- This document does not need to be notarized.
- Please type out your answers on a separate sheet of paper and sign it.

## FEDERAL TAX RETURN

This document is issued from the government and verifies your earnings for a certain year.

### What You Need to Know:

- You only need to provide your most recent year's tax information
- Only the first two pages of the 1040 are necessary

# DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY YOU

- Your tax return must be signed and notarized. You will find a true and accurate copy notary form on the portal that can be used to notarize this form.

## TYPE OF CHILD ACCEPTABLE TO FAMILY (SPECIAL NEEDS CHECKLIST)

This document will inform the Philippines' government of your approved child parameters

### What You Need to Know:

- This form is provided for you on your family's portal.
- Complete this form with the special needs you are comfortable with. Please try to be consistent with the special needs you were approved for in your home study.
- Your special needs form should be signed by both parents and social worker.

## PHOTOS OF FAMILY AND HOME

While you are working on your paperwork, you should be preparing photos of your family and home for NACC. AGCI recommends sending in photos presenting your home and family in clear and current pictures. 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.
- You should be modestly dressed (no bathing suits please).
- Also include photos of the interior and exterior of your home, including each room in your home.
- Please add photos to a word or PDF document where you can add captions to each photo explaining who is in the photo, what activity you are doing, and the rooms in your house. Please print in color or mount all photos on three 8.5x11-inch white sheets of paper. Please label the pictures.
- Your photos should be sent to your international adoption specialist with your completed dossier.

### Photo Requirements:

- One of each parent alone
- One of parents together

# DOCUMENTS PREPARED BY YOU

- Two of entire family (if you have children at home)
- One of extended family
- A few of family outings (hiking, camping, day trips, etc.)
- One of the front exterior of your home
- One of the rear exterior of your home
- Photos of each internal room in your home

## 5- MINUTE VIDEO OF FAMILY

This is a video introduction of your family and a walk-through of your home.

### What You Need to Know

- The video should be around 5 minutes, and no longer than 10 minutes.
- The video should have two sections, and can be split in two separate videos if easier
  - Part one: your of home
  - Part two: introduction of family
- The tour of the home should include a walk through of each bedroom in your home, and the outside of your home as well.
- The introduction of your family should include your family dynamics and your plans on how you intent to nurture a healthy parent- child and sibling relationship with the prospective adoption child.
- Please include a link of the video on the document of the photos, and send a link to your IAS in email. YouTube or Vimeo are the best way to share these video links.

Note: When you send in a letter of intent for a specific child, you will be providing updated videos at this time. The updated video will include information about that specific child. Please keep editable video on file for future use.

# USCIS

## USCIS APPLICATION OVERVIEW

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:

- 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](http://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.
  - Letter to the Department of Homeland Security - confirming photocopies are true and accurate copies

# USCIS

- 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 AND SUPPLEMENT FORMS

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](http://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.
- 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

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“one or two” children. If these numbers do not match, USCIS will send you a Request for Evidence (RFE) delaying your approval.

## COVER LETTER REGARDING ANY ARRESTS (IF APPLICABLE)

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):

- 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.”

## 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.

## 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.

## FEEES

USCIS fees cover the costs of application and fingerprinting. You can find the fee calculator here:

<https://www.uscis.gov/feecalculator>



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## 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 produces 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 NOTICE OF APPROVAL (I-800A APPROVAL LETTER)

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:

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- 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 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 I-800A approval letter will need to be notarized with the Notary Letter for NBC Notice of Approval on the portal before including it in your dossier packet.

# SUBMITTING YOUR DOSSIER

## SUBMITTING THE DOSSIER

- Your IAS requires a scanned copy of each individual document for your Dossier.
- 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 notary pages when scanning.
- Documents should be attached and sent to your IAS through email. 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 the checklist below for the order in which the documents should be submitted.
- Your IAS will provide you the mailing address.

## DOSSIER CHECKLIST SUBMISSION ORDER:

1. Applicant Photos and Video link
2. Passport copies
3. NACC Application
4. Oath and Undertaking
5. Home Study
6. Type of Child Acceptable to Family Form
7. Birth Certificates
8. Medical Forms
9. Medical Statement for Children
10. Psychological Evaluations
11. Self-Report Questionnaires
12. Marriage Certificates
13. Divorce/Death Certificates
14. Consent of Children (10+)
15. Criminal Checks
16. Character References
17. Guardian Letter
18. Employment Verification Letters
19. Federal Tax r=Returns
20. Adoption Decree
21. USCIS Notice of Approval (I-800A Approval Letter)

# SUBMITTING YOUR DOSSIER

Note: Once you have completed all your documents including the home study, please first send a full virtual copy of your dossier documents to your IAS for review. Then, once approved, gather all dossier documents and mail together at one time with the applicable fees. At that time, we will review these dossier documents and prepare them to be sent to the Philippines once you receive your Notice of Approval from Immigration and request from NACC to submit.

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!