

QUESTIONS TO ASK AN ADOPTION AGENCY BEFORE YOU ADOPT INTERNATIONALLY

1. Is the agency licensed in New York State? The NYS Office of Children & Family Services maintains a list of adoption agencies licensed by New York State. You can view the list at www.ocfs.state.ny.us/adopt/agcymenu.asp or you can call the OCFS in your area. If you plan to finalize the adoption in NYS the agency must be a licensed by the state of NY.
2. Is the agency Hague Accredited? If it is, when does its accreditation expire? If you plan to adopt from a country that has ratified the Hague Intercountry Adoption Treaty you must work with an agency that has Hague accreditation.
3. What countries does the agency work with? How long has the agency worked with each country you are interested in?
4. Is the agency accredited in the country (not all countries require this)? If they are, what is the expiration date?
5. Are the foreign agencies the agency works with licensed in their own country?
6. How many years has the agency had an adoption program? What type of children does the agency place (infant, toddler, special needs, older child)? How many years has the agency been working with any in-country staff for the country you are interested in? How long has the in-country staff been completing international adoptions?
7. Are there restrictions on who can adopt through the agency (age, income, length of marriage, previous divorce, religion, single parent, sexual orientation)? Do the restrictions vary with different programs or types of children? Each country has its own regulations on who can adopt.
8. How many children did the agency place last year? Two years ago? How many adoptions does the agency anticipate for this year? Ask specifically for each program you are interested in.
9. How many families are currently awaiting placement in the program you are applying to?
10. Is it possible to talk with families who have adopted from the program you are interested in? Can you talk to parents that did not have a completely positive experience with the agency?
11. What support is available throughout the adoption process? Does the agency have meetings or online groups for waiting parents?
12. Are you assigned to a different caseworker during each phase of the adoption? Will you be informed of the status of different phases (application, dossier, referral, waiting, and post-placement) of the adoption process in a timely fashion?
13. Does the agency provide any general information of the culture, race, ethnicity, or language of the country you are considering adopting from?
14. What paperwork and meetings are involved in the initial application? Can you specify age range, sex, and number of children you wish to adopt on the agency's application? How long does the application process take? Will an agency social worker complete

- the home study? When will you know if you are approved? If you are not approved, can you find out why? Is there an appeal process?
15. What is the agency's process if country you are applying to closes its international adoption program? Can you switch to another program within the agency? What, if any, fees are transferred to the new program and which fees need to be paid again for the new program?
 16. What will be the total cost of adopting from the country you are interested in applying to? Does the fee cover the home study, travel, food, translator fees, hotel, drivers, donations to orphanages, gifts to officials and host families while abroad, all post-placement visits, the fee to the placing agency, immigration fees, transportation in the country, miscellaneous fees such as visa, dossier preparation, notarization, medical exams, document translation, and exit tax? Are there any services that cost additional? What type of payment schedule does the agency have? You should never pay the majority of the fee at the beginning of the process. What is the agency's policy about fee payment if the adoption is not completed?
 17. How long does it take from approval to the referral of a child? How and when is a referral made? How long does it take from the referral of a child to the child coming home?
 18. What immigration paperwork do you need to complete? What help will you receive from the agency in completing the immigration paperwork? Where do you need to go for finger printing?
 19. Does the agency take care of authenticating documents or are you responsible for obtaining them?
 20. Has an agency representative visited the orphanage and/or the in-country facilitator? If so, how frequently does an agency representative visit? What is the orphanage or foster care like?
 21. What is the current political climate in any country in which you are considering adoption? Have the country's adoption laws recently been changed or is the country considering changing its adoption laws? Have there been any recent suspensions or unexpected delays with the program? How is the agency informed about changes in foreign law or procedures? You can also call the counselor's office at the US Embassy in the country you are considering or the country's embassy in Washington DC to learn if there are any problems with the agency you are considering or with adoption by US citizens in the country.
 22. What does the agency do to ensure that the child is a documented orphan?
 23. What information is available on the birthparents? Will there be any contact with the birthparents? How and when will the birthparents rights be terminated? Will you be able to meet the foster parents or caregivers to learn the child's routine?
 24. What types of medical conditions are usually seen in the children from the countries you are considering adoption from (e.g. Parasites, Hepatitis B, fetal alcohol syndrome)? What medical tests are done on the children and how reliable are they considered to be?
 25. Will you receive medical and social background, a video or a photo of the child you are referred? Does the agency have a person on staff to review the medical records and

- interpret the results? How would the agency feel if you were to show the medical background to an outside consultant?
26. Will you know if the child has any siblings? What is the agency's policy on separating siblings?
 27. How long do you have to make a decision on the child you are referred?
 28. What happens if you feel the referral is not a good match?
 29. Will you have to travel to the country? Have the agency describe the process once you are in the foreign country. Will you need to make more than one trip to the country? If so, how long will your stay in the country be? Will you be moving from one city to another? How much money will you need while in the country? Will you be required to carry cash in the country? If so, how much? Will you need a visa and will the agency complete the necessary application? Will an agency facilitator go on the trip or will there be an in-country agency representative that will host? How much support will you receive while in the country? Will you need to routinely contact your agency while you are abroad? Who will make flight and hotel arrangements? What advice can the agency provide you concerning traveling and bonding with your child? Does the agency provide bilingual staff for translations?
 30. Does the country you are applying to finalize the adoption in the country or is the adoption finalized in the United States after you return home? What procedures will be necessary to finalize the adoption in the country?
 31. If the adoption is finalized in the United States will you be the foster parent or the legal guardian of your child while you are waiting for the adoption to be finalized? Foster parents do not have the same parental rights as guardians and parents of children.
 32. Will you need to readopt in the United States if the adoption is finalized in the foreign country?
 33. Will you need your own attorney? To verify an adoption attorney is in good standing in NYS call the Office of Court Administration at 212-428-2800. Contact the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys www.adoptionattorneys.org for information on attorneys that specialize in adoption.
 34. What are the post placement report requirements? Can you complete the report or is a home visit by a social worker required? What is the agency's current compliance rate for post placement reports? Lack of compliance has resulted in some countries suspending adoptions. How does the agency ensure compliance?
 35. Does the agency have any cultural programs or post adoption services for families after the adoption is finalized?
 36. If the agency hears from a birth family member after placement will the agency let you know?