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## ***WELCOME!***

Life's Vision International is a fully licensed international adoption and children's humanitarian aid agency that serves parents and children worldwide. We work in Africa and Asia, and can shepherd adoptions of infants and children for parents anywhere in the United States and abroad. We believe that every adoption involves a parent and child who have a unique connection and are just waiting to be united. We are dedicated to helping you find the child who is meant to share your life. We are equally committed to supporting you beyond your adoption as you live your dream as a family.

### **Life's Vision International Adoption Services Include:**

- ◆ Education and preparation of the adoption process
- ◆ Home Study (for Washington residents) with or without placement services
- ◆ Post-placement reports (for Washington residents)
- ◆ Dossier preparation assistance
- ◆ Immigration procedure assistance
- ◆ Authentication of paperwork assistance
- ◆ Information on each country in which we provide placement services
- ◆ Successful Placement services (for families living in any US state and abroad)
- ◆ As much handholding as you want!

### ***Other services provided by Life's Vision International, or Networking Agencies, include:***

- ◆ Adoption information meetings
- ◆ Parent Education classes
- ◆ Counseling
- ◆ Coaching
- ◆ Support groups
- ◆ Waiting families support group and activities

### ***Why Choose Life's Vision International?***

At Life's Vision International, our job is to ensure your peace of mind. We are committed to personalized, one-on-one assistance before, during and long after your adoption. Our goal is to successfully bring you together with the child who is meant to share your life and we will do all that is necessary to make this happen.

Their future and your joy depend on it.

### **Contact Us:**

If you would like more information or wish to apply for our Home Study and/or adoption placement services, please contact us: Local (425)614-3938; toll free: (866) 236-7833 or by email: [info@lifesvision.org](mailto:info@lifesvision.org)

## The Adoption Process

As a prospective parent considering international adoption, the first step is often a very unsteady one. To help you find solid ground, we offer these guidelines to ensure that your process will be well informed. Should you choose Life's Vision International as your placement agency, we will provide the details and services around each of these steps.

### ***Pre-Adoption and Adoption Steps:***

- Learn all you can about international adoption from available resources.
- Identify the country from which you would like to adopt your child.
- Apply for or renew passport.
- Initiate Home Study.
- Obtain documents required for Home Study.
- Prepare documentation required for Form I-600A.
- File I-600A with Home Study Report.
- Obtain documents required for your Dossier.
- Obtain notarization and authentication of documents, as needed.
- Prepare for the referral of your child.
- Obtain guardianship or final adoption decree.
- File Form I-600.
- Obtain U.S. visa for your child.
- Obtain visa or tourist card for travel to your child's country.
- Prepare for your adoption trip.
- Meet your child!
- BRING YOUR CHILD HOME!

### ***Post Adoption Steps:***

- Medical evaluation with a pediatrician in U.S.
- Apply for Social Security card.
- Speak to Life's Vision International or your Homestudy agency about your country's post-placement home visits or family reports.
- Finalize your child's adoption in the U.S.\* or re-adopt to obtain a U.S. birth certificate.
- Consult with an attorney regarding a Will.
- Consult with a tax professional about federal and state adoption tax credits.
- Obtain proof of citizenship – now automatic if issued an IR-3 Visa\*.

### **Adoption Requirements:**

Life's Vision International eligibility criteria: consistent with those required by local, state, federal, international and immigration laws.

*\*Effective February 27, 2001, the Child Citizenship Act of 2000 now grants immediate citizenship to many foreign-born children adopted by at least one US citizen parent. When both parents travel to finalize an adoption abroad and the child is issued an IR-3 Visa, the child automatically becomes a citizen.*

*However, if one or both of the adoptive parents do not travel to the foreign country, an escort brings the child to the US, or the foreign country merely grants guardianship of the child to the adoptive parents, the child is issued an IR-4 Visa, and citizenship is not automatic until the adoption is finalized in the US.*

*We will be happy to confirm your child's country policies.*

## **USCIS Paperwork**

No children may enter the country from abroad without the USCIS approval.

If you are an American citizen you must obtain approval from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) before you will be allowed to obtain a visa for your adopted child. In cases where one spouse is not a US citizen, the spouse who is a citizen must be the petitioner. Additionally, if only one spouse travels, the petitioner should be the one who travels.

To expedite the approval process, USCIS has divided it into two parts:  
I-600A and I-600.

### ***First Part: I-600A***

The first part is Form I-600A and is called the Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition. As the I-600A can be a lengthy process, you may speed it up by submitting just the form and fees as soon as you commit to adopting. Just inform USCIS in a cover letter that you will provide the Home Study Report and required documents when home study is done (you have 12 months).

USCIS requires the applicants to be fingerprinted for the purpose of criminal background checks and schedules individuals to go to an authorized site. You will be notified of the time and place after your I-600A application has been received.

Required documents to accompany the I-600A (All certificates must be issued by and bearing the seal of the state the event occurred in):

1. Home Study Report
2. Certified Birth Certificates
3. Certified Marriage Certificate
4. Divorce Decrees, if applicable

Send the I-600A and the filing fee of \$670 plus the \$80 per person fingerprinting fee for each member of the household over the age of 18.

The USCIS office will complete the I-600A approval (USCIS form I-171H) process by cabling the consulate you have indicated on the application. USCIS approval is valid for 18 months from the issuance date. When you receive the I-171H make sure to check that your I-600A application has been forwarded to the American Consulate or Embassy of your child's country.

### ***Second Part: I-600***

The second part is form I-600 and is called Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative. This form is used to show that the child is a documented orphan by USCIS rules. It is to be completed and presented at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy office in the child's country of residence or in your home state in the U.S. where you filed the I-600A. This depends on the country you are adopting from.

### ***Your Child's Visa to entry the U.S.***

The adopting parents, or a representative of your agency in your child's country, must submit to the immigration officer at the US Consular office the following:

### **The Visa Application – Form 230**

You can find this at: <http://www.state.gov/m/a/dir/forms/>

### **Proof of Medical Examination by a US Consulate Panel Physician.**

A Panel Physician must be used and is typically a local doctor who has obtained this position from the consulate. Parents will receive a sealed envelope with the results of this screening. You must not open this envelope.

*Please Note: This medical examination is a very cursory examination and is not a complete screening and as such should not replace a complete screening done by a qualified physician after you return home.*

### **USCIS Forms I-864 Affidavit of Support & I-864A Contract Between Sponsor and Household Member**

Along with copies of the last three years of tax returns including any attached schedules, and proof of employment to show that the parents have an income which exceeds 125% of the poverty level for that size family including all newly adopted children. The I-864's are not required for all countries, check with your adoption agency.

### **Payment of Fees**

The visa fee for each child is \$400 U.S. and is paid in cash at the U.S. Consulate office in your child's country.

You can go to: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> (click on Immigration Forms) to download forms I-600, I-600A, I-864 and I-864A.

## **The Home Study**

Home Studies are an opportunity for you to learn more about the adoption process, ask any questions that you might have, express any concerns and find support and guidance. The home study provider will also be evaluating the family's desire, commitment and readiness to adopt. During the home study process families usually reach the decision to either proceed toward adoption or withdraw.

There is no set format used to conduct home studies. Home study providers must follow the general regulations of their State and USCIS, but they have the freedom to develop their own application packet, policies, and procedures within those regulations. The home study will include writing your autobiographies, letters from older children in the home, a social worker's visits to the home, interviews, checking references, reviewing medical, financial, and other relevant information. The following is just **some** of the information and experiences you will write about in your autobiography and will be asked about in the home study interviews:

**Autobiography:** Your own written description of your life, starting with when you were born.

**Letters from or interviews with children in the home:** Letters from older children in the home stating their feelings and approval of the adoption. Younger children will be interviewed.

**Personal background:** Date of birth, current employment and job satisfaction, education, hobbies, activities, social contacts, religion.

**Physical and health history of the applicants:** Appearance, height, weight, treatment for infertility, significant medical conditions, treatment for emotional, psychiatric, or substance abuse problems, ever have mental health/marriage/family counseling.

**Family background of each applicant:** Upbringing, type of discipline and/or punishment and feelings about it, key events, and what was learned from them. Parents names, occupation, health, marital relationship, support/nurturing and decision-making abilities. Siblings names, birth order, past and current relationships with each.

**Significant people in the lives of the applicants:** Friends, church, groups, associations, work peers/associates, community, support system.

**Marriage relationships:** How did you meet. Length and nature of courtship, date and place of marriage. Decision making process. Primary areas of stress and/or disagreement. What is the relationship like. How is conflict resolved.

**Previous marriages:** History, reason for and how relationship ended, date and place of divorce. Children from previous marriages, visitation and child support.

**Motivation to adopt:** When did you start thinking about adoption. Why adopt.

**Preparation for adoption:** Classes. Books. Groups. Friends/family who have adopted. Adoption agency. Adoption services.

**Expectations for the child:** I want him to go to college. I want him to be healthy, etc. DO NOT SAY: I want him to have a better life than he'd have had.

**Parenting:** Childrearing beliefs, discipline methods, agreements and disagreements of discipline methods, how are they resolved, support for one another as parents.

**Integration of the child into the family:** Where does child fit in family hierarchy. How do the other children in the home feel about adoption (social worker will interview most family members individually). How do you/are you going to handle sibling rivalry.

**Knowledge and attitude toward country child is from:** Discuss families' readiness to incorporate culture of country child is from into their home.

**Home environment:** Description of home, yard, and housekeeping standards. Neighborhood and community. Basic care and safety issues.

**Insurance coverage:** Health and life.

**Economic situation:** Sources and amounts of income. Assets and liabilities.

**Childcare plans:** Daycare, relative, nanny, stay at home mom or dad.

**References:** Letters from family, friends, church, work peers, etc.

**Criminal background clearances:** Letter from local police department and FBI

**Child abuse clearances:** Home study worker will request from state.

**Guardianship plan:** Name, addresses, and relationship to adoptive parents.

**Summary and home study provider's recommendation:** The home study provider will summarize all interviews, home visits, and verification of reports and clearances, insurance, financial information, and reference letters. They will also include the adoption agency's license along with recommendations concerning your desire to adopt. The summary, (Home Study Report) will go to the USCIS and as a document in your dossier.

It is confusing – most documents required for the home study process are also required for your dossier and a few for the USCIS Form I-600A! Make sure you request enough certified copies of documents to cover all requirements. Check with Life's Vision International to see where you can get by with photocopies.

**Documents usually required for the home study process:**

- Written autobiography by each adoptive parent
- Letters from older children in the home
- Financial Statement
- Copy of tax returns
- Copies of health and life insurance policies
- Employment Verification
- Physician Letters
- Certified marriage license
- Certified birth certificates
- Divorce decree(s)
- Local police and FBI clearance of each household member over 18
- Child abuse clearance for every member of the home over 18 – Home study provider will request from state.
- Letters of Reference

## **The Dossier**

A dossier is comprised of all the legal documents necessary to complete your international adoption. The documents required vary by child's country, your state, and the placement agency. Most of the documents must be notarized and for most countries, have a state seal by the Secretary of State office to verify the notary. Some countries require US Department of Secretary seal of authentication to verify the Secretary of State. And further yet, some countries require that the dossier is stamped by its Embassy in Washington DC which will make the dossier a legal document for that country.

Below is a list of documents that are typically included in the dossier.

- Home Study Report
- Post placement agreement
- Financial statement
- Employment verification
- Physician Letters for each person in the home
- Certified marriage license
- Certified birth certificate
- Divorce decree, if applicable
- Local police clearance of all persons in the home over 18
- Copies of signature and photo page of parents passports
- Power of Attorney letter(s)
- Letters of Intent to Adopt
- USCIS form I-171H
- Letters of reference
- Pictures

Life's Vision will advise you on form, certification, notary and authentication requirements and how many needed of each document.

## **Travel**

*Getting ready to travel:*

Apply for passport

Apply for entry visa in your child's country

Get required immunizations and education about food and water

Education yourself about the country you are traveling to

Learn about the country's language, culture and etiquette, appropriate clothing to wear while there.