

Adoption Procedures for the International Programs

We hope that this sheet, along with other information that you may have received, will give you a clear picture of our goals and procedures. The agency is available for support and consultation throughout the process. Please call the office if you have any questions.

PRELIMINARY PROCEDURES

1. Prospective parents attend an information meeting that provides a basic overview of the agency's programs.
2. Applicants fill out an application that provides basic information about the applicant. It is helpful at this stage to identify any major problems (i.e. medical or legal problems) that might affect the advisability of proceeding further.
3. The applicants return the application to the office. The Director of International Programs reviews the application and contacts the prospective parents to schedule an orientation meeting. At the orientation meeting, they will discuss the prospective parents' plans to adopt, review the agency programs and services, explain staff roles, and give the prospective parents a home study package.
4. The home study package consists of a home study worksheet, medicals, autobiographies, copies of tax returns, police and child abuse forms, names of references, photocopies of birth and marriage certificates and divorce papers where applicable. Documents are returned to Barker as they are collected. Once all the paperwork has been completed, a home study social worker is assigned. She will contact the family directly in order to arrange for the home study interviews. The home study interviews will begin as soon as possible within two weeks, depending on your availability and the social worker's availability.

PRE-ADOPTION GROUPS

Prospective adoptive parents are required to attend a pre-adoption group training to discuss long-term issues in adoption prior to beginning their home study interviews. The goal of the discussions is to help people make an informed decision about adoption. However, groups are open to anyone who would like to explore adoption further prior to applying to an agency. Registration information is included in this packet of information.

THE HOME STUDY

The home study is a series of interviews; joint and individual interviews are generally held in the office, and a final interview is held in the home. The home study does have an evaluative function. However, the major function is to help the prospective parents begin to develop an understanding of adoption and the complex issues it raises in an adoptive family's life. The home study is thus a preparation for parenthood, specifically adoptive parenthood.

The various countries available for international adoption are discussed during the home study and prospective parents are often put in contact with families whose experience may be useful to them. With the final decision to proceed, the agency writes a home study report that is submitted to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (U.S.C.I.S.) and to the overseas or facilitating agency.

DOSSIER PREPARATION

Barker provides guidance in applying to CIS (Immigration). After the prospective parents have collected the various documents required for a dossier in their selected country, The Barker Adoption Foundation will take those documents through any required steps of authentication.

SUBMISSION OF DOCUMENTS AND REFERRAL

1. When the home study and dossier are complete, they are sent to the overseas agency by courier.
2. A child is referred to a family and the information on the child is sent to Barker. The referral information is reviewed with the family by the Director of International Programs. Families are encouraged to review the information with a physician as well.
3. Barker relays acceptance to the foreign contact and helps prepare the parents for the trip overseas.
4. Travel requirements vary depending on the country.

POST PLACEMENT PERIOD

1. Although many children have a final decree of adoption from their birth country, post placement services are required by most sources and are necessary to readopt in your state of residence. The post placement period extends at least from the time the child arrives home until the time the parents file for finalization in the state of residence. This is usually six to nine months after placement. During this time, the social worker is available to help the family with the inevitable adjustments of this period
2. The social worker and the family meet three times in the first six months.
3. Parents submit three medical reports filled out by the child's pediatrician and write three reports about the family's adjustment.
4. At the end of the post placement period, IF the family chooses to readopt, the social worker writes a report to the court based on the visits and the medical and family's reports. (Required in Virginia and the District of Columbia.)
5. The family or their lawyer files for adoption in the state of residence. (This is a requirement for families adopting in countries giving guardianship, and optional for other families)
6. The family files for citizenship for their child (naturalization). (NOTE: Children who have a final decree of adoption in their birth country and were seen by both parents prior to finalization are given automatic US citizenship upon entering the United States.)

AFTER POST PLACEMENT

Although the formal post placement period ends, the relationship with the agency (including social functions for families, educational programs for parents, and fundraising functions for the agency) continues to play a vital role in many families' lives. Barker social workers remain available to discuss adoption and parenting issues with families, and later on, with those who were adopted.