



COLOMBIA ADOPTION Letter of Understanding

As with ANY international adoption, the culture and lifestyle in any international country is very different from that of the United States. The following are some points that prospective adoptive families must understand as they commit to this International Adoption program. We, at Children's House International (CHI), feel it is of utmost importance that families are aware of the pros and cons of any of our adoption programs.

As Adoptive parents:

1. I/we understand that the primary method of communication concerning our adoption will be through e-mail. I/we will inform CHI of any problems with our e-mail or change of address during the process so there will be no interruption of communication through e-mail.
2. I/we understand that the ages of waiting children vary by country and that babies are generally not possible. I/we understand that marital status will vary by each country.
3. I/we understand that it is Children's House International's policy that our home study must be written by a Hague accredited agency. In situations where a Hague accredited agency is not available, the International Specialist and the Case Manager will work with the Prospective Adoptive Parents to find an agency that can write the home study.
4. We understand that during the home study process all of our children, including those who are adults and not living in our home, will be interviewed. We understand that they will be asked if they support us adopting another child(ren) and their responses will be written in to the home study. The Colombian authorities place a high value on this support. We understand that if our children do not support the adoption, it could mean that the Colombian government will not approve our family to adopt from their country.
5. I/we understand that all Children's House International's adoptive families are required to take Hague compliant, pre-adoption courses which includes a minimum of 10 hours. These courses are offered on the Internet through various online resources including but not limited to Adoption Learning Partners, Creating a Family and Heart of the Matter. I/We understand that course requirement will ultimately be determined by my/our Social Worker and the Social Services Supervisor. The following are recommended courses: "Hague Package for International Adoption" from Creating a Family. I/We understand that I/we will be required to complete additional training beyond the minimum 10 hours, including child specific training. I/we agree to complete these courses and understand that these must be finished before my/our home study is completed.
6. I/We understand that life in other countries can move at a much slower pace than here in the United States. Keeping in mind that customs are different, etc., I/we are willing to be patient with and understanding of the people of our adopting country and be good representatives of both CHI and the United States of America.

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7. I/We understand that CHI has no control over how often waiting children will be referred. The waiting time is dependent on each country. CHI can give us an idea of how things have moved in the past, but cannot guarantee how things will move in the future. I/we further understand that I/we will not be allowed to travel to pick up our child without the permission of CHI.
8. I/We understand that I/we can only travel to country with permission from CHI. If I/we choose to travel before I/we am/are granted permission I/we understand that this could cause delays in my/our process and I/we could end up staying in the country longer than expected or may mean I/we must make multiple trips to the country. CHI is not responsible for any expenses/costs incurred for such delays.
9. I/We understand that children being adopted from international countries sometimes come with scabies, malnourishment, parasites, etc. They may improve rapidly once they get the medical care and nutrition they need.
10. The adoptive family understands the child may have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse prior to adoption and may exhibit sexualized behaviors in their new home. The family understands that they will need to provide counseling or other resources to help their child deal with these experiences if these behaviors are evident once home. The family understands that these behaviors may not be apparent to the foreign caregivers prior to adoption.
11. I/We understand that the medical records may not be complete when I/we receive a referral. I/we further understand that I/we will receive very basic medical information on the child and the biological parents if available.
12. I/We understand that I/we are not required to accept any **one** referral. CHI requests that a family who decides to decline a referral do so based on medical conditions, not physical attractiveness, hair color, eye color, skin tone, etc. I/we will be requested to give CHI a written reason for declining. An answer of yes or no must be given regarding the referral 2 weeks after the child is referred.
13. I/We understand that it is possible, if there is an unexpected delay, CIS (US Immigration) documents may have to be re-submitted if our approval will expire before our adoption is completed. CIS fingerprints will have to be re-submitted before the CIS approval time of 18 months. Home studies must be updated yearly. There may be more documents required to be done over. I/we understand this is not CHI's policy but they will be informing us of any new document requirements as they hear of them. These repetitive processes will likely involve additional financial investment.
14. I/We understand that, as specific information concerning our case comes along, private emails and phone calls will be made to us individually. CHI cannot call every family each week to say there is no news. Family phone calls to CHI are always welcome.
15. I/We understand that our travel cannot occur until I/we have paid all fees, turned in all CHI documents, and submitted out dossier. Travel is dictated by government requirements. It is impossible for CHI to promise you a specific time for travel in advance. Length of travel varies by country. I/we will be understanding and respectful of different cultures and religious backgrounds while traveling.

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16. I/We will learn as much as possible about our adoptive child's culture and help our child to know about his/her culture and participate in cultural activities as much as possible.
17. I/We understand that I/we will have CHI agents/representatives in our adoptive country to help us through the process. These reps will do their best to be sensitive to our needs and to help us through the adoption process.
18. I/We understand that a PAR deposit is required for all families who do not pre-pay all required Post Adoption Reports in advance. (Proof of prepayment is required for non-CHI Home Study Agencies)
19. I/We understand that if I/we have paid a PAR deposit to CHI, this money will not be refunded until CHI has received the required post placement reports written by a social worker, copies of the final adoption documents I/we received in country, and a copy of our child(ren)'s U.S. certificate of citizenship.
20. I/We understand that CHI strongly encourages that BOTH parents travel, or that the traveling parent has another adult accompany them. I/we understand that depending on the country I/we are adopting from, one parent maybe allowed to travel on their own, or may be allowed to return home during the process, either by law or with previous permission granted by the local foreign government authorities. I/we also understand that when only one parent travels there may be additional paperwork required by foreign government officials and the U.S. Embassy, and the time spent in the country could be extended. CHI is not responsible for additional costs or time incurred if only one parent travels or if one parent returns to the U.S. before the adoption can be finalized in country, including processing of the U.S. Visa.
21. I/We understand that I/we are expected to travel to the country to accompany the child home. I/we understand that if an escort is requested or needed, I/we must obtain prior approval from the Executive Director. I/we also understand that our request will only be granted in unique circumstances and if the country allows.

As Adoptive parents:

1. I/We understand that citizens of Colombia are a mixture of Latino, Indigenous, European and African ethnic groups with a variety of skin tones and facial features that are similar. Our family is ready and able to parent a child of any color. I/we are prepared to accept that our family may be an interracial family forever once I/we adopt a child from Colombia. I/we understand that our child's experience of the world will be very different than ours.
2. I/We understand that in Colombia some parents abandon their children. I/we can accept not having any information about our child's birth family.
3. I/We understand that I/we must accept the fact that the order in which adoption documents are processed seems "random" at best. In fact, a dossier that was sent to Colombia after ours could indeed be completed before ours, and the child able to travel home before our child.
4. I/We understand that if we choose to submit a Letter of Intent on a waiting child and do not yet have a completed and approved dossier by ICBF, there is a risk that ICBF could refer child to another family. Should another dossier be presented for said waiting child before ICBF has approved our dossier, the child could be referred to the family with the dossier approved at the discretion of ICBF.

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5. I/We understand that there have been times when circumstances beyond anyone's control have resulted in an adoptive family losing a referral and not being able to adopt the child that was referred to them. Should this occur, I/we understand that I/we will receive a new referral and no additional agency fees will be required.
6. I/We fully understand that once the case has exited *the Colombian Institute of Child Welfare*, or ICBF, the adoption is full and final and the child is legally ours, and will have our last name, I/we will accept full responsibility of this child as their own. Should I/we, while still in country, decide for whatever reason that I/we do not want to parent this child after being considered the legal parent(s), I/we agree to provide financial support for the child until the legal dissolution of the adoption is completed. I/we will be fully responsible for any court costs, attorney's fees, multiple travel or extended stay in country to dissolve the adoption. I/we agree to pay all these fees. If I/we leave the child without these arrangements in place, I/we understand that I/we can be charged with child abandonment and potential arrest in the country of Colombia. I/we understand this is a serious situation and agree to be responsible, to stay in touch with Children's House International and to finish all the steps necessary so that the adoption can be dissolved and the child can be re-referred to another family. I/we hereby agree to work at all times in the best interests of the child concerned.
7. I/We understand that families adopting from Colombia are required to provide ongoing post adoption reports until our child is home for 2 or 3 years. FOUR reports will be required if the child we adopt is under 8 years old. SIX reports are required for all children 8 years old and older AND all sibling groups. The post adoption reports are due at 6,12,18 and 24 months (plus 30 and 36 months, if applicable) from the date the adoption is final in the country. These reports must be completed by a social worker. A template and instructions for this report will be provided to the social worker upon completion of adoption. I/we understand that the report must address child's psychological health; include report cards for school aged child; include a note from child's pediatrician stating over all health; plus at least 8 to 10 recent and labeled photos of child. I/we understand that the Colombia government may ask for additional reports to be completed if they have any concerns. I/we agree to furnish these reports at these intervals and any other additional reports and pay for all fees relating to them, including apostilles.
8. I/We agree to send to CHI upon arrival home with our child, a complete photo copy of the adoption documents and translations given to us by the attorney and ICBF, including a copy of our child's Colombian passport and visa. Immediately upon receipt of our child's U.S. Certificate of Citizenship in the mail, I/we agree to send a photo copy to CHI.

After reading and carefully considering all the above listed items, I/We understand the unique program details as written above and agree to comply with those requirements. I/We are comfortable with pursuing an adoption through Children's House International's Colombia Adoption Program.

Date Signed _____

Prospective Adoptive Parent

Prospective Adoptive Parent

Printed Full Name

Printed Full Name

Children's House International Representative

