

GEORGIA 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. 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.
5. 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.
6. I/we understand that CHI has no control over how often 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.
7. 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.

Initials _____, _____



8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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 I-797 approval time of 15 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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 Homestudy Agencies)
18. 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.

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19. 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.
20. 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 only children that have been approved through the Georgian ministry will be approved for referral.
2. I/we understand that once our paperwork is officially registered in Georgia, I/we are then eligible to receive a referral of a child. CHI has no way to know how quickly our first referral may be received. CHI will work very hard to receive a referral as quickly as possible, but can only estimate a timeframe of 6-18 months at this time. This is subject to change.
3. I/we understand that families are **STRONGLY** encouraged to send any written information, pictures and/or video to an international adoption specialist (doctor) who is familiar with the particular diagnosis that may be written on the medical. Some terms may mean different things in the US than they do in Georgia. Some tests may be missing on the medicals of the child. At times, these tests may be requested to be taken; at other times, some tests are not available to be taken in the country. CHI is not in charge of the labs where the tests are made nor does CHI have a physician that can give us advice concerning physical or mental questions. I/we understand that is why CHI suggests I/we send the information to a specialist.
4. I/we understand that CHI has no control over how often waiting children will be referred. Once a child is referred to us, there may be a 4 month to 6 month wait until I/we can travel. I/we further understand that I/we will not be allowed to travel to Georgia to pick up our child without the permission of CHI.
5. I/we understand that there is usually one trip required for about 3 weeks. There may be an option to do it in two trips. The first trip for court will last about one week. The second trip to pick up your child will be 2-4 weeks later. Only one parent is required to travel.
6. I/we also understand that the foreign courts can ask for any additional documentation in order to review our case. CHI is not responsible for any additional costs incurred for updating and obtaining these documents.
7. I/we understand that in Europe, many "holiday" (vacation) periods exist and sometimes last for days or weeks at a time. These holidays may close down the very offices that are needed to process our adoption. Summer time in Europe is traditionally a time for at least one month to be spent away for most government officials. At the least, there will be a slow-down in the government. Christmas and Easter holiday seasons are similar and usually take 1 full week for Easter and mid-December until mid-January for Christmas. I/we will expect some slow-downs at those times.

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"Loving a Child has no Boundaries"

8. The child will become our legally adopted child after the adoption decree and any legal waiting period (up to 30 days at discretion of the court). I/we will accept full responsibility of this child as our own. Should I/we then, while still in country, decide 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 understand that 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 these fees. I/we understand that if I/we leave the child without these arrangements in place, I/we can be charged with child abandonment and potential arrest in the country of the child's birth. 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 child can be re-referred to another family.

Finalization

9. I/we understand that families adopting from Georgia are required to submit (through CHI), 4 written post adoption reports by a social worker, at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months, and then annual reports written by the family for 5 years. Include 4 recent photographs of the child as well.
10. I/we are strongly encouraged to re-adopt our child in the USA. This will give us a US adoption degree and a state birth certificate.
11. 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 in country, including a copy of our child's passport and visa. Immediately upon receipt of our child's U.S. Certificate of Citizenship in the mail, I/we agree to send a photocopy 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 Georgia Adoption Program.

Date Signed _____

Prospective Adoptive Parent

Prospective Adoptive Parent

Printed Full Name

Printed Full Name

Children's House International Representative