



## COLOMBIA ADOPTION Letter of Understanding

As with ANY international adoption, the culture and lifestyle in any foreign country is very different from that of the United States. The following are points that Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAP) 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 referrals of babies are generally not possible. I/We understand that marital status requirements 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 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 of pre-adoption training. These courses are offered on the internet through various online resources including but not limited to Creating a Family, Adoption Learning Partners, 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 agree to complete these courses and understand that these must be finished before my/our home study is completed. I/We understand that I/we will be required to complete additional training beyond the minimum 10 hours, including child specific training.
6. I/We understand that I/we will be required to take training every 6 months until final adoption on fundamental adoption issues.

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7. I/We understand that a completed home study must be received by CHI for review within 6 months from the date of application acceptance. If after 6 months a draft is not received, I/we will be billed \$250 per month late fee (quarterly invoice) until a draft is received by CHI for review. I/We understand that the home study will not be reviewed until the full late fee is paid, and that if after an additional 6 months the draft and all fees have not been paid the case will be closed. I/We understand that circumstances out of our control can arise that would cause us to be past the six-month requirement to submit our home study to CHI. Should this occur, we may write an appeal giving the reasons for the delay and it will be reviewed by the Executive Director, International Specialist and Case Manager. They will review the appeal within 2 weeks and decide if the time allowed and/or fee should be extended or waived. I/We understand that extension or waivers will not be granted for clients who are delayed due to family trip/vacations or school/education commitments.
8. I/We understand that I/we will be required to take additional training that addresses specific needs of the child identified for adoption, likely at the time of referral, and before I/we can travel to pick up the child. These are Hague requirements.
9. 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 and to be patient with the difference in urgency or time.
10. 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 and without all fees and documents completed and up to date.
11. 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.
12. Although I/we may have specified that I/we would like to adopt a "healthy" child, USCIS will not approve the diagnosis of 'healthy', and neither will the country where the child lives. I/We understand that a diagnosis of 'healthy' is not realistic, as all children will have some developmental delays, some trauma due to the lives they have had to live and experience prior to being legally adoptable. In addition, they may have additional psychological or medical needs that will be described in their medical and social histories. CHI will discuss all of these details with me/us to help me/us understand and decide what needs I/we are comfortable parenting. Additionally, I/we understand CHI cannot guarantee the results, validity or accuracy of examinations, tests, inoculations or assessments.
13. 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.
14. I/We understand the child may have experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse prior to adoption and may exhibit sexualized behaviors in their new home. I/We understand that I/we will need to provide counseling or other resources to help the child deal with these experiences if these behaviors are evident once home. I/We understand that these behaviors may not be apparent to the foreign caregivers prior to adoption.

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15. I/We understand that the medical records may not be complete when I/we receive a referral. I/We further understand that I/we may receive very basic medical information on the child and the biological parents if available.
16. 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.
17. I/We understand that it is possible, if there is an unexpected delay, USCIS (US Immigration) documents may have to be re-submitted if our approval expires before our adoption is completed. USCIS fingerprints will have to be re-submitted before the USCIS approval time of 15 months. Home studies must be updated yearly. There may be more documents required to be re-done. 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.
18. 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.
19. I/We understand that our travel cannot occur until I/we have paid all fees, turned in all CHI documents, and submitted our dossier and been given an official referral. 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. Teacher's vacations and special travel requests are never honored in foreign countries. They expect you to be willing to travel when the time comes and to stay according to the time frame given.
20. 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.
21. 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. However, they do not request special treatment that might require 'bribes'. They will not do something illegal. They do not control the local governments or the law of that country.
22. I/We understand that a Post Adoption Report (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)
23. I/We understand that if I/we have paid a Post Adoption Report 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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24. 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 may be 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.

25. 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.

26. I/We understand that travel in other countries and contact with foreign-born children may expose us to health risks. It is my/our responsibility to consult with my/our health care provider or the Centers for Disease Control about vaccinations recommended or required before travel.

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**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 if we are a Heritage family (born or adopted in Colombia or have Colombian parents) a Colombian birth certificate and ID (cedula) are required. The names on these Colombian documents must match the name(s) listed on my U.S. Passport. If this is not the case, I/we will immediately notify the international specialist before entering this program to make sure there is an easy solution.
4. 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.
5. I/We understand that if we choose to submit a Letter of Intent on a waiting child for which I/we are in the dossier process and it is approved by ICBF (*the Colombian Institute of Child Welfare*), I/we have no more than 8 months to submit the dossier to ICBF. This approval is not an official referral which only comes after the dossier is approved by ICBF. If I/we do not submit in the allotted time given by ICBF, I/we understand that the child could be referred to another family at the discretion of ICBF.

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6. 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.
7. I/We fully understand that once the case has exited 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.
8. 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.
9. I/We agree to send to CHI upon arrival home with our child, a complete photocopy 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 photocopy to CHI.

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**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

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