



## GEORGIA 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.
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 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.

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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.
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. Each report must include 4 recent photographs of the child as well.
10. I/We understand that I/we are strongly encouraged to re-adopt our child in the USA. This will give the child a U.S. adoption degree and a state birth certificate.
11. 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 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.

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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 Georgia Adoption Program.**

Date Signed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prospective Adoptive Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Prospective Adoptive Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Full Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Full Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children's House International Representative

REVIEW ONLY