



PORTUGAL 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 Placement Report (PPR) deposit is required for all families who do not pre-pay all required Post Placement 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 Placement 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 ages of waiting children are usually 2 years and up; babies are generally not possible.
2. I/We understand that Portugal is legally required to relist children on the domestic registry in Portugal for short periods of time and does not take the children off the international registry when this occurs. This happens for a period of 30 days every 90 days until the child is officially matched. If during one of these 30 days relisting periods also referred to as a National Survey, if a domestic family steps forward they will always be given priority over international families. I/We further understand that Portugal lets CHI know when this occurs with a child/children that a CHI family has expressed interest in. I/We understand that this does not necessarily mean that the child/children will become unavailable to international families, but that it is a possibility, as domestic adoption is prioritized over international adoption for the benefit of the child.
3. I/We understand that CHI has no control over how often waiting children will be referred. Once a child is referred to me/us, there may be a 1-4 month wait until I/we can travel. I/We further understand that I/we will not be allowed to travel to Portugal to pick up my/our child without the permission of CHI. I/We understand that the government of Portugal may ask me/us to interview virtually with them as well as with my/our CHI team and home study social worker prior to travel. I/We are willing to comply with that request.
4. I/We understand that there is a bonding period trip of approximately 6-8 weeks required, dependent on the US Embassy in Lisbon. Both parents must travel. Apartments or private arrangements are recommended for the extended stay. I/We understand that the government of Portugal requests that I/we bring an additional adult with us if we plan to bring any of my/our children on the bonding trip. The purpose of the third adult is so I/we, the adoptive parent(s), can give my/our full attention to the adoptive child for the first 2-3 days of the bonding period without my/our other children present. Once those days are past, my/our other children may be present in the visits. The additional adult does not have to stay more than one week unless I/we decide I/we want them to stay longer.

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5. 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.
6. 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 my/our adoption. Summertime in Europe is traditionally a time for at least one month to be spent away for most government officials. Christmas and Easter holiday seasons are similar and usually take 1 full week for Easter and mid-December until mid-January for Christmas.
7. I/We understand that BOTH parents are required to travel for the transition period to meet my/our child and obtain guardianship. While it may be legally permitted for single applicants to travel alone, CHI strongly advises single parents to bring another adult for support. I/We also understand that when only one parent travels there may be additional paperwork required by the Portuguese officials and the US Consulate at the time of travel that I/we are responsible for compiling. CHI is not responsible for additional costs or processing that may occur if only one parent travels OR one traveling parent leaves Portugal before the US visa has been completed.
8. I/We understand that we will be granted legal guardianship of the child by the courts in Portugal and are allowed to return to the United States with the child after the transition period. Should I/we during the post placement period, decide I/we no longer want to parent the child, or it is no longer in the best interests of the child to continue the placement, I/we will inform CHI immediately and CHI will contact the Portuguese and U.S. Central Authority, concerning the situation. CHI will support and provide counseling, and if the child should be removed, the Portuguese Central Authority and the Local specialized adoption team where the child resided, will be the lead in this process to return the child back to either the foster family or the orphanage. The Central Authority local specialized adoption team will regain responsibility and custody of the child.
9. I/We understand that I/we will NOT be granted full and final adoption of my/our child in Portugal. My/Our child will be granted an IH-4 Visa, which means, I/we must meet the minimum post placement reporting requirements of the state I/we reside which can be up to 6 months before I/we can finalize the adoption in the United States. Portugal requires ONE post placement report in the first month and one for every 3 months after arrival until the child is fully adopted in the United States. Those reports are paid for by us/the family and I/we also understand I/we will need to send the report to CHI with apostilles on each report. CHI will then translate the report and send it to the government of Portugal. CHI requires two more reports after adoption, which I/we will also pay for.
10. I/We agree and commit to fully adopt our child once I/we are legally allowed to do so in the State where I/we reside. I/We will keep in communication with CHI during this post placement and full adoption phase. I/We understand I/we are responsible for sending CHI an original of the adoption decree with an apostille attached, which CHI will send to Portugal as evidence of full and final adoption. I/We understand that I/we will NOT be granted full and final adoption of my/our child in Portugal.
11. I/We understand that my/our child will not be granted automatic citizenship. I/We will finalize the adoption in the U.S. and apply for the child's certificate of citizenship by submitting the form N-600 to USCIS.
12. I/We understand that the Portuguese Central Authority may require additional post placement OR post adoption reports beyond the minimum required by the state I/we reside in. I/We agree to comply with the reports.
13. I/We understand if we are a returning CHI family, I/we must be in compliance with my/our post adoption reports before I/we can begin another adoption.

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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 Portugal Adoption Program.

Date Signed _____

Prospective Adoptive Parent

Prospective Adoptive Parent

Printed Full Name

Printed Full Name

Children's House International Representative

REVIEW ONLY