

International Adoption

How do I select a country?

It is important to check the requirements for each country to see if your family fits the guidelines. Some countries have restrictions on age, weight, marital status, income, and a variety of other factors that could weigh into your decision. Most of this information is available online at adoption.state.gov.

International Adoption Information:

In 2015, the top ten countries for international adoption were:

- China - 2354
- Ethiopia - 335
- South Korea - 318
- Ukraine - 303
- Uganda - 202
- Bulgaria - 185
- Latvia - 170
- Congo - 168
- Nigeria - 154
- Columbia - 153

Suggested Questions for International Adoption Agency Selection

The specifics of an agency's adoption program vary considerably by country. The following is a general list of suggested questions that are designed to help families in selecting an adoption agency for an international adoption.

General Questions About the Agency:

- What are the agency's requirements for adoptive families (e.g., age, marital status (including previous divorce(s)), number of children already in the home, religious, criminal background, financial, health considerations)? Note: Requirements will vary by country.
- How long has the agency been in operation?
- In what countries does the agency have adoption programs? How long has the agency had an active adoption program in the country of interest?
- Has the agency's program in the country of interest ever been suspended or terminated (as a result of loss of accreditation or otherwise)? If so, why and for how long?
- What is the current adoption climate in the country of interest? How stable has the country program been in recent months/years?
- In what regions/cities within the country of interest does the agency work? Can families specify a specific region/city within the country?
- Does the agency have any religious or denominational affiliation?
- Will the agency provide contact with families who have recently used the agency to adopt from the country of interest (i.e., family references)?
- Are families allowed to specify the gender of the child they wish to adopt? Note: The ability to specify gender will vary by country.
- How are waiting children cared for in the country of interest (i.e., orphanages/institutions, foster homes, etc.)? How is the funding for such care provided?
- Does the agency have any affiliations with orphanages, social service agencies, facilitators or others in the country of interest that will be significantly involved in the adoption process?

Questions About Fees and Costs:

- What fees and costs are charged by the agency in connection with the adoption process and when are they due?
- What costs and expenses will likely be incurred in addition to the agency's fees and costs (i.e., homestudy expenses, legal expenses, filing and processing expenses, etc.)?

Questions About Wait Time:

All questions regarding wait times should be asked in relation to a specific country program.

- What is the current estimated wait time for families? How many families are currently waiting?
Note: Wait times at most agencies are often highly dependent on the adoptive family's parameters (e.g., age, gender and health factors that the adoptive family is willing to consider). To the extent that an adoptive family has already determined certain of its fundamental parameters, questions regarding wait times should be asked in specific relation to those parameters (e.g., what is the estimated wait time for an infant girl).
- What is the longest wait time for any of the families that are currently waiting for an adoption?
- Have average wait times for families increased, decreased or remained generally the same over the past several years (and if they have increased or decreased, why)?
- How often should I expect to hear from the agency workers during the waiting process?

Questions About the Agency's Previous Placement Experience:

- How many children has the agency placed in each of the past five years from the country of interest?
- How does the agency handle failed placements (e.g., where on the wait list is a family that has experienced a failed placement placed, are there any additional fees or costs imposed, etc.)?

Questions About the Agency's Matching and Finalization Process:

- What children are available in the country of interest (i.e., children of what age, gender, sibling groups, etc.)?
- How does the agency's matching process work for the country of interest?
- What background information (e.g., medical, social, family history, etc.) is generally available regarding the child and/or the child's biological family?
- Does the agency provide pictures and/or video of the referred child?
- Once matched, does the agency provide the adoptive family with pictures and/or videos of the child? Does the agency provide updates regarding the child's growth, medical condition and/or development?
- Once matched, does the agency allow the adoptive family to travel to visit the child? If so, are there any significant limitations regarding such visits?
- What are the travel requirements for the country of interest (i.e., are families required to travel in order to bring their child home or is an escort service available as an option)? Are both parents (if applicable) required to travel? How long must they stay in country?

Disclaimer: This document is not intended to constitute, nor does it represent, legal advice of any kind. A qualified attorney should be consulted with respect to any legal questions or issues.