



PREPARING FOR YOUR HOME STUDY NON-ALABAMA RESIDENTS

To begin, it is important to recognize that a home study is a written report that represents you to all of the “adoption authorities” you will encounter throughout your adoption journey – US Immigration (USCIS) and International Adoption Authorities (CARA for India and CCCWA for China). Keeping this in mind, your home study provider and your social worker will need to have a very full understanding of your life up until now – in a very short amount of time. We understand that those who are new to this process might feel a bit overwhelmed or even nervous. The goal is for your home study process to be informative and engaging.

Securing your home study agency

Your Children of the World adoption coordinator will provide you with contact information for home study agencies in your state. If there are multiple options, you may call/inquire before you make your selection.

Important items to consider when selecting your home study agency:

- Do they have a waiting list or will you be able to begin immediately?
- What is their average length of time for completing a home study – from start to finish.
- Ask for a fee schedule that includes **all** costs associated with the report (out of pocket expenses, agency fees, social worker fees, etc). Also, what is their cost for an update (should your family experience a change after the report is finalized) and what are their costs for post placement reports (you will need a minimum of 3 after you come home with your child)

After you have made your selection, inform your Children of the World adoption coordinator so that communication can be established between the two agencies. Your adoption coordinator will provide the home study agency with various documents (exempt provider agreement, template, guidelines, etc).

Required documentation for home studies

Home Studies are legally required for all adoptions and must be completed in accordance with the standards of your state. The various guidelines are established as a way to protect the best interests of children, to help ensure that each child will be placed in a safe and loving home, and to provide information and education to prospective adoptive parents.

The following is an example of a list of documentation:

*Birth certificates for all in household
Proof of Citizenship, if applicable.
Reference letters
Letters from financial institutions
Fingerprint clearances
Financial Disclosure*

*Marriage license, divorce decrees
Medical evaluations for each family member
Autobiographies for prospective adoptive parents
Tax return, employment verifications
Child Abuse and Neglect Clearances
Proof of insurance*

Education and Preparation to adopt

During this phase you will also begin to document your required and suggested adoption education. Children of the World families use an online form to save and track their education process.

- Your social worker will need to document your training and preparation to adopt and parent your child in your home study report. *However, education and preparation is on-going throughout the entire adoption process.*
- All international adoption home studies require at least 10 hours of “Hague Approved” adoption education. China requires 12 hours.
- Information related to this topic, and how education should be submitted/documented is provided in one of your portal tasks.
- Your home study agency may have additional requirement related to education.

Home visits and Interviews

Please know that the home visits and interviews are just a second step in the process of “getting to know your family”. This is a time for your social worker to ask questions so that they can paint the best picture of who you are as individuals, together as a couple, what kind of parents you are / will be, etc. It’s an open discussion time when you can also ask questions and know that the two of you are on the same page!

- The number of home visits may vary (by foreign country, and state requirements). The couple will be interviewed together and separately. They will be observed with their children and children may be interviewed separately depending on age.
- The social worker is assessing personality, relationships, motivation and preparation to adopt, parenting philosophy and practice. She will also be gathering or clarifying history information regarding your family. *Relax and be yourself.*
- Remember, the home study report is a detailed and intimate written document that will represent your family to US Immigration and the foreign country you are adopting from. Your home study team has a very short amount of time to get to know you at the level needed to create this type of report.

This is also an excellent time to ask questions and gather information on valuable resources that are available. Your social worker will not be a person that simply comes, assesses, and leaves. Instead, work towards keeping an open mind to their advice, and develop a connection. You will have questions when baby comes home – and your social worker can offer a tremendous amount of support.

After The Report is Written

- Once the social worker has completed the report, the review process will begin.
- You, the Children of the World Director of Social Services, and your Home Study Agency’s Director of Social Services, will each review the report.
- It is common for suggestions/revisions to be made at this time. The goal is for the report to meet the requirements of the state you reside and the needs and preferences of USCIS and your foreign country.
- After all revisions are made, the report is “finalized”, your Children of the World adoption coordinator will be sent notarized copies to be distributed. You will receive a copy for your file, one will remain in your Children of the World file, one will be sent to USCIS, and one included in your dossier.

Relax and enjoy the process! You are starting your adoption journey! Remember also – this is the portion of the process that is in your control. Staying on top of tasks and completing them in a timely manner now will go a long way in the overall timeline.