

IAG Russian Adoption Process*

There are approximately 7 steps involved in completing a Russian adoption. Most of these steps can be expedited if prospective parents are prompt in completing the required paperwork. The steps outlined below are those that require prospective parent involvement. There are also numerous other steps, such as notarization, certification, apostilles, dossier preparation, and document translation that the agency completes as part of the IAG services. See the IAG Costs page for additional information.

IAG application. IAG requires a completed application and a non-refundable fee of \$275 to be submitted along with the application for adoption.

Homestudy. The homestudy is a series of questionnaires and interviews conducted by a licensed social worker or representative from a licensed agency. The process usually takes 6 – 9 weeks to complete.

Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) Form I-600A. The CIS form can be obtained by calling the 24 hour forms request line or by downloading it from their website. This form should be requested even though the home study may not be completed. An application for passports, if not already obtained, should be made at this time. See the CIS instructions included in this packet.

Interview and contract with IAG. After submitting the completed home study and application, IAG will schedule an in-person interview with the prospective parents. This interview provides an opportunity to establish mutual trust as parents progress toward adoption. Assuming parents and IAG are compatible, the prospective parents will be asked to sign an adoption agreement that details the agency services and the financial obligations of the parents.

Adoption Education. IAG offers extensive adoption education to prospective parents. The requirements for pre adoptive parents include attendance at classes and completion of designated reading materials with written assignments. These educational requirements must be completed before a family can receive a referral. Once a family returns with their child, additional reading materials are recommended. The details of these programs are provided at the time of the interview.

Child Selection. Children are not always available immediately upon completion of the dossier documents or the interview with IAG. The length of the wait for a referral depends on several factors, including prior families on the waiting list, the age and gender of the child desired and the availability of referrals from the Russian government.

Once children meet the requirements for eligibility they must satisfy a mandatory national registration period. This period is to allow citizens of Russia the opportunity to adopt before a child is made available for international adoption. Only upon completing the registration period can children be referred to prospective foreign families whose dossiers have been registered with the appropriate adoption officials in Russia in accordance with the laws of the country.

Generally, there is very limited medical information available about the background of an eligible child and, in most cases, no medical or social information is known about the biological parents. Prior to placement in the baby home, the children are tested for HIV, venereal diseases and hepatitis B and C. All of the information that is received is provided to the prospective parents. Additional medical testing may be available, at the expense of prospective parents.

Note that even after a child has completed the registration period, and until the completion of the adoption hearing, a Russian family could adopt the child at any time. In such rare instances, IAG will work diligently with the prospective parents to obtain another referral.

Travel. All prospective parents are required to travel to Russia to complete the adoption. As part of IAG services, all travel arrangements can be made by the agency. While in the country, parents are accompanied by a driver and translator. IAG has employees in St. Petersburg and Moscow who handle coordination of all aspects of the trip. The agency will assemble and translate all documents which are required by the American Embassy in order to obtain an immigrant visa for the adopted child.

Citizenship is automatically conferred on the child upon their legal arrival in the United States.

* See the additional country specific information pages for more details on adoptions from Russia.

Adoption Eligibility

Parents must be at least 25 years old, married a minimum of two years, and at least one parent must be a citizen of the United States.

Unfortunately, in the areas which IAG works, officials will not approve adoption by a single male. Generally, there must not be more than 44 years difference between the age of the child and one of the parents. Also, certain medical conditions may affect adoption eligibility, but each situation is judged independently.

IAG does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex or disability. The country where the child resides, however, may have specific limitations and requirements that ultimately determine the prospective parent eligibility.

IAG does reserve the right to decline to work with any family or individual who does not meet the criteria established by the country where the child resides or is determined by IAG to be incompatible for international adoption.

IAG will not place two unrelated children with one family at the same time, unless exceptional circumstances are present. Adopting one child at any given time allows for easier integration into family life and allows children to develop a sense of security. Siblings, however, are placed together as required by law.

IAG Advantages

The International Assistance Group is committed to providing personal service throughout the adoption process to help parents legally adopt eligible children from Russia. Some of the advantages of using IAG are outlined below.

1. IAG provides comprehensive adoption services and places a premium on personal attention and specialized service.
2. IAG provides progress updates for each child, between the time the child is referred and the time the adoption is finalized.
3. IAG requires in-person interviews with all prospective parents to assure that both parties are able to work together toward the adoption.
4. IAG may be able to arrange independent medical examinations for children prior to adoption from Russia. This can provide added peace of mind about a child's overall medical condition.
5. IAG has unparalleled and direct communication and personal relationships with everyone involved in the adoption process. Daily communication enables IAG to stay abreast with the latest political developments affecting adoption.
6. IAG handles all aspects of the adoption process from complete dossier preparation to arrangements for travel (including invitation and visa), from extensive preparation and education to worry free travel in Russia and Guatemala. Each step of the way the client is guided through the daunting bureaucracy. Clients and their children are never placed in jeopardy by having to carry large sums of money for payment to individuals in Russia or Guatemala.
7. IAG has an extensive program of pre and post adoption support and education, a mentoring program, a newsletter, a website, and reunions in Pittsburgh and various regions of the country.
8. In the entire history of IAG, not one family has traveled and been unable to complete their adoption.

531 Fifth Street • Oakmont, Pennsylvania 15139
Phone: 412-828-5800 • 1-800-720-7384 • Fax: 412-828-5876
E-mail: info@iagadoptions.org • www.iagadoptions.org

IAG Management

Larisa Mason is the Executive Director of the International Assistance Group. She is a native of St. Petersburg and arrived in the United States in 1978. Larisa started the adoption agency in 1992 after working on humanitarian aid efforts for orphanages and baby homes in the former Soviet Union. She is very active in the international adoption community and works tirelessly to lobby U.S., Russian, and Belarus government officials for favorable adoption legislation. She has one adopted child from Russia.

John Bentz is the Chief Financial Officer of the agency. John is responsible for all financial matters of the organization and has worked with the agency since its inception in 1992. John has over 20 years of general business experience. He has one adopted child from Russia.

Carol Michaux is the Manager, Case Workers for the agency. She is responsible for coordinating office procedures including obtaining adoption documents from adoptive parents, preparing dossier information, coordinating the translation of all documents and travel preparations. She supervises the agency adoption specialists, who work with adoptive parents throughout the adoption process. Carol has approximately 20 years of office experience and has worked for the agency since 1994. She has three children.

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IAG Adoption Education & Support Services

Parent Support Group

The program provides an open environment in which to share parental concerns. A variety of topics have been discussed including: how to talk about adoption, attachment and bonding, school selection, discipline issues, and medical insurance. This group meets in Pittsburgh on a monthly basis.

Parent Education

There are two parent education programs offered by the International Assistance Group. One education program requires parents to complete written assignments, read a variety of adoption information and attend classes, where available (IAG provides classes for clients in Pittsburgh). A second program offers post adoption education classes. The classes are offered on Saturday mornings for clients in the Pittsburgh area.

Mentoring

The agency offers a peer mentoring program to all pre adoptive parents. While in the process of adopting, all pre adoptive parents are assigned to a mentor who has previous adoption experience with IAG. The mentor contacts pre adoptive parents on a monthly basis to provide additional support and guidance during the adoption process.

Newsletter

IAG provides a newsletter for all adoptive parents and prospective parents. The newsletter includes topical information about parenting, agency information, adoptive family stories, book reviews and pending legislation. Clients are provided with the necessary password to access the newsletter on the website.

Website

IAG maintains a website, www.iagadoptions.org, that contains up to date information about the agency, the adoption process, legislative changes, current events, news items pertaining to adoption, and other general information.

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Who is the International Assistance Group?

The International Assistance Group ("IAG") is an accredited, non-profit, licensed adoption agency established in 1992. The agency was one of the first accredited by the Russian government. In addition, in 1999 and 2002 the agency received accreditation from the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children, Inc. for its intercountry adoption services. This designation signifies that IAG is one of the outstanding adoption agencies in the United States and attests to the high quality of its services.

IAG provides a comprehensive adoption program that emphasizes personal attention and specialized service. As such, IAG limits itself to approximately 100 adoptions each year. The agency is unique because the American staff of IAG is personally involved in every aspect of each adoption. IAG has unparalleled, direct communication and personal relationships with all those involved in the adoption process.

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IAG Humanitarian Aid & Agency Activities

IAG was founded in 1992 as a result of humanitarian aid efforts and has provided direct aid to orphanages in the form of medical equipment, shoes, clothing, toys and supplies for children since that time. In addition, IAG has purchased washing machines, dryers, food processors, irons, medicine, etc. for use in the baby homes.

Through the generosity of clients, IAG has provided rehabilitation equipment for use by the children suffering from cerebral palsy and other debilitating conditions as well as providing funds and supplies to greatly improve the physical and environmental structures of the homes. IAG has sponsored other humanitarian aid projects including an early intervention program in cooperation with the University of Pittsburgh, a physician exchange program, the establishment of a transitional living program that houses children who have graduated from orphanages and have no other place to live, and a scholarship program which gives orphans an opportunity to receive a university education and a chance to live a meaningful life.

Reunions

IAG sponsors several reunion events each the year in Pittsburgh. This usually includes a Russian Christmas party and a picnic in the summer. In addition, throughout the year reunions are held in various regions of the country.

White Nights

Each spring, the agency celebrates the "White Nights" of St. Petersburg by raising funds for various IAG sponsored humanitarian projects. This fundraising effort is often coupled with a reunion weekend with activities for the children, a dinner dance and a brunch. Baby home directors, IAG Russian employees and Russian dignitaries also join us for these festivities.

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Citizenship and Immigration Service Forms (CIS)

I-600A Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition

- When to file:** The same time that the home study begins.
- Where to file:** The local CIS office.
- Fees:** The current fee is \$670.00 as of July 30, 2007 plus \$80.00 for each set of fingerprints. Payment must be made by money order or certified check. These fees are subject to change.
- CIS Response:** “Notice of Favorable Determination” (form 171-H or 797-C)

Specific answers

- To questions:**
- #11 Yes
 - #12 Yes
 - #13
 - a. A date approximately 4 months from the current month; e.g., current month is March so July would be listed.
 - b. Same as above
 - c. Unknown
 - #14 No
 - #15 Yes
 - #16 The first part should be left blank.
The section asking for “American Consulate” or “Embassy” should be marked as MOSCOW, RUSSIA for those adopting from Russia and Guatemala City for those adopting from *Guatemala. If it is not yet known from which country you will adopt, please contact your IAG Case Manager to discuss the correct answer to this question.
 - #17 If a parent is interested in adopting siblings, this section should be marked “yes”. This answer needs to be consistent with your home study recommendation/approval.

CIS forms are available on line at www.uscis.gov or by calling the CIS forms request line at 1-800-870-3676

***For those adopting from Guatemala, please consult with IAG before completing this form.**

Russia

The economic and social conditions of Russia and the former Soviet Union resulted in thousands of children being placed in orphanages. Many of these children are born to single mothers for whom it is not economically feasible or socially acceptable to raise a child on her own. In other situations, a child is abandoned at birth because of medical problems, and others are removed from the biological home and parental rights are terminated. Unfortunately, only a small number of these children are eligible to be adopted under Russian law and US immigration requirements.

Once children become available for adoption, they are required to satisfy an eight month national registration period monitored by local and national government officials. Only upon completion of the registry period can children be referred to prospective foreign families whose dossiers have been registered with the appropriate adoption officials.

IAG assists families from dossier preparation and throughout the entire adoption process. Currently IAG has programs in the city of St. Petersburg, where we began in 1992 and the Moscow region (outside the city of Moscow), started in 1995. Limiting its activities to these two regions has allowed IAG to establish and maintain outstanding relationships which contribute to the quality and integrity of the adoption program.

2005 and 2006 have been years of great change in Russian adoption; changes which are continuing. Negative publicity led to a tightening of the process. Some of the changes affect the number and duration of required trips.

The first trip is designed for parents to obtain a referral and to visit the child at the baby home. An independent medical examination for the child can be arranged at this time. If the family accepts the child, they sign a final acceptance and the procedure to complete the adoption is initiated. This first trip is generally 5-6 days.

On the second trip, the parents visit their child and attend the adoption court hearing. Following the hearing, a ten day appeal period may be imposed. The imposition of this waiting period results in a second trip of approximately 2 ½ to 3 weeks. The family has the option of leaving the country and returning at the expiration of the 10 days to complete the adoption. (In very limited situations, this 10 day appeal period is waived, in which case the second trip lasts approximately 5-7 days.) Following completion of the appeal period, a new birth certificate, an adoption decree and a passport are issued.

All families are required to depart the country from Moscow, where they complete the U.S. government requirements. The adopted child must undergo a pre-immigration physical and the family attends an interview at the American Embassy in Moscow, before obtaining an immigrant visa for the child. Children adopted from Russia retain their Russian citizenship. Because of this, families must register their child with the Russian government prior to leaving the country.

Throughout the entire process, families are accompanied by a driver and translator, who will walk you through each and every required step. From greeting you at the airport, to gathering documents, to accompanying you as you visit the sights of the city, your driver and translator are there to make your trip as stress free as possible.





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Adoption Application

Please complete the information below and on the subsequent pages. Upon completion, please submit it along with a non-refundable application fee of \$275, (includes review and evaluation of application and homestudy materials), by check made payable to the International Assistance Group (IAG). In addition, please send photographs of you, your family and your home, If your homestudy is already completed, please forward a copy with your application.

If you reside in Pennsylvania, and would like IAG to complete your homestudy, please include a separate check, in the amount of \$150, made payable to IAG. Upon receipt, a homestudy packet will be sent to you for completion.

IAG does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, religion, ethnicity, national origin or race. The application information is used by the agency solely to ensure a successful international adoption experience, and is strictly confidential. IAG will notify you promptly if the information provided indicates that a successful adoption is not feasible, due to the laws of a particular country, or for any other reason.

Please complete all of the information requested. Print legibly as much of the information will be transferred to legal documents. If you have questions, please contact the IAG office at 412-828-5800 or email IAG at info@iagadoptions.org.

FAMILY NAME:

DATE:

Husband Full Name: _____

Wife Full Name: _____

Maiden Name _____

Address _____

STREET

CITY

STATE

ZIP

Home Phone _____

Email _____

Home Fax _____

Work Phone: Husband _____

Wife _____

Cell Phone: Husband _____

Wife _____

Date of Birth: Husband _____

Wife _____

CHILD PREFERENCE

Please indicate your preferences regarding an adopted child. While we make every reasonable effort to identify children that match your preferences, placement time can vary greatly depending on availability. Keep in mind that flexibility is the key to an expedited placement. You may mark more than one box if necessary.

Adoption Destination:

Russia

Guatemala

Age at time of adoption:

12-24 mths.

24-36 mths.

4-12 mths.

12-24 mths.

24-36 mths.

Gender Preference:

Either

Male

Female

Male

Female

Either

WOULD YOU CONSIDER:

Siblings (must specify in homestudy)

Yes

No

Will Consider

Special Needs

Yes

No

Will Consider

Asian or Eurasian child

Yes

No

Will Consider

Comments: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Husband

Wife

Birthplace (City,State)	
Citizenship	
Ethnic Background	
Religious Affiliation	
Height/Weight (approximate)	
Highest Level of Education	
Military Service	
Date of Present Marriage	
Total number of divorces	
Name, age and gender of children from previous marriages, not residing with you.	
Present Place of Employment	
Address	
Address	
Occupation	
Date of Employment	
Annual Earnings	
May we contact you at work?	
Work Fax Number (optional)	
Email (if different than home)	

Please list all other persons residing in your home.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Country of Origin/Agency</u>	<u>If an Adopted Child</u> <u>Date of Adoption</u>

Child Care Plan: provide a brief statement regarding your child care plan after the adoption.

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

Is your Homestudy completed? Yes No

Name of Homestudy Agency _____ Date Completed (or Expected) _____

Address of Agency _____ Phone Number _____

Social Worker Name _____ Fax Number _____

A draft of your homestudy should be submitted prior to finalization.

Do you have passports that are valid for at least one year from the date of this application?

Husband: No Yes Passport #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Wife: No Yes Passport #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Have you applied for an I600A approval from the Immigration and Naturalization Service?

Yes (Date of Filing) _____ No _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Please provide emergency contact information below.

Physician Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Fax _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone Number _____ Relationship _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone Number _____ Relationship _____

TRACKING INFORMATION

Please check the method by which you were referred to IAG.

Internet/Website Yellow Pages Information Meeting

Homestudy agency (name and location) _____

Conference (name and location) _____ Other _____

Friend/Relative(name) _____

APPLICANT AUTHORIZATION

By signing below we vary that the aforementioned information is true and accurate. Our/my signature on this application also authorizes IAG to contact any of the individuals listed on this application, including but not limited to medical, medical personnel, home study agency and contact persons. Further we understand that falsification or omission of information could result in the termination of adoption services at the time the falsification is discovered and forfeiture of any fees paid to that date.

Signature of Prospective Parent _____ Date _____

Signature of Prospective Parent _____ Date _____