



nightlight®
christian adoptions

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

Nightlight Christian Adoptions is licensed by the Department of Social Services in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas to select suitable families for children needing adoption. The selection of adoptive parents is based on their eligibility to meet state and agency requirements as well as the requirements and preferences of the applicable foreign country. The home study process also will assess their capacity as adoptive parents and the characteristics of children whose needs they can meet.

- RESIDENCE:** Nightlight works with families living throughout the United States. No specific residence requirements are applied other than those stated by the involved countries and their respective governments.
- CITIZENSHIP:** At least one (or sole) adopting parent must be a United States citizen.
- RELIGION:** Applicants must be committed to providing their child with a constructive, wholesome and spiritual home environment.
- HEALTH:** Adoptive applicants must give evidence of good health, both physical and mental, which will be verified during the application process by a letter from the applicant's physician.
- AGE:** Generally, we believe that there should be no more than 45 years difference between the age of the adopting parents and the age of the adopted child. However, some countries have stricter or more relaxed requirements. Texas Residents: According to HB 2969 adoptive parents must be allowed to adopt without a maximum age limit. However, country laws will supersede TX law. The country will not accept a family's application if the family doesn't meet the country requirements.
- MARRIAGE:** Adoptive applicants are encouraged to have been married a minimum of two years when the home study begins. We hope this period will provide the couple sufficient time to establish a home, financial security, and to adjust to the marriage as well as to each other. Married applicants must have a satisfying and secure marriage. Single parents are eligible to adopt if they meet the qualifications of a stable home environment, financial security and have a strong support network of family and friends. Eligibility for single parents to adopt varies among countries.
- EDUCATION:** Classes and reading pertaining to parenting skills and adoption issues are required of adoptive families. Our goal is to prepare you to be the best parents possible for your child.
- POST-ADOPTION/POST PLACEMENT SUPERVISION:** Most countries require the adopting parents to report on the child's placement after the adoption for a period of 3-5 years. Once the child is home, adopting families must agree to have post-adoption visits based on the country's and Nightlight's requirements. These reports and photos of the child and family are then forwarded to the child's country.
- FINANCES:** Adoptive parents must be able to pay fees and costs based on the fee schedule for their specific country. All fees and costs must be paid before travel. Special assistance may be possible based on the needs of the child to be adopted and the financial needs of the family.

PREGNANCY:

Before you begin the adoption process, you need to complete all your infertility treatments so you can truly be ready to be the best parent for your adopted child. **If you become pregnant while in the adoption process, notify our office immediately.** We may place your file on hold depending on the length of process in the country you are adopting from. When you are ready to consider adoption again – generally at least when your child is nearing the first birthday – call us to discuss reactivating your file. Fees paid to Nightlight are only good for 2 years from the date you went on hold. When you come off hold you will receive and sign the current fee schedule in place for the program you are adopting from at the time that you are returning your case to active status.

DRUG HISTORY:

Free of substance abuse (alcohol, prescription drugs, any THC products and marijuana or illicit drugs) for 5 years. Note that if you use CBD oil containing THC, and your state requires drug testing, it will show as positive.

**ADOPTION OF
SUBSEQUENT
CHILDREN:**

To have adequate time for attachment and bonding, it is important to have a minimum of one year with the child/ren in the home before beginning another adoption.

If you have questions about these policies, please talk with us. The guidelines we have established are designed to make your adoption successful.

NIGHTLIGHT[®] CHRISTIAN ADOPTIONS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What services does Nightlight[®] Christian Adoptions (Nightlight) offer?

Nightlight is licensed to provide the following services:

- Domestic and International Home studies and post adoption/placement services
- Domestic Adoptions: Agency Adoptions, Independent or Designated Adoptions
- Adoption Service Provider for UAA Adoptions.
- International Adoptions
- Snowflakes[®] Embryo Adoptions
- Birthparent counseling services
- Foster Care

Is Nightlight a non-profit agency?

Yes, Nightlight is a 501(c)(3) non-profit agency. Fees paid by adoptive parents as well as any fundraising efforts throughout the year cover agency expenses.

What is your licensure information?

Nightlight Christian Adoptions has been licensed by the California State Department of Social Services since 1959 and is also licensed by the states of Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas. Nightlight's Adoption Home study and Post Adoption services are available to families within our licensed areas. We are Hague and COA accredited.

Does Nightlight assist with out-of-state adoptions?

Yes, we can assist you in completing an International, Embryo or an Interstate adoption. You would just need to work with an agency licensed in your state to provide Home Study and Post Adoption Services. If you are adopting internationally, your agency must have an Exempt or Supervised Provider Contract on file with our office and must be Hague accredited.

What if we are not Christians?

The Christian in our name explains who we are. We work with families from a variety of religious backgrounds.

Approximately how long does it take to adopt internationally?

It depends on the country you choose to adopt from as well as the time it takes you to complete your home study and dossier, but typically an international adoption will take about 18 months to 4 years from the start of the home study to finalization. Please refer to the country descriptions for more detailed information.

What is the adoption process?

(Please refer to the individual country descriptions for more detailed information on the adoption process in each country.)

Home study – The home study is an evaluation and education process required by the State to determine your preparedness to parent through adoption. A home study consists of three components: paperwork, education and interviews with a social worker.

USCIS- Every family adopting internationally will be required to apply to US Immigration and Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Your adoption coordinator will advise you on which form to file and at which times. You will first file a form to obtain pre-approval to adopt internationally. Your completed home study must

be submitted with this application to USCIS. Then later when you are matched with a child you will file additional forms to obtain the child's visa.

Dossier – The documents required by the foreign government to allow you to adopt a child from the country. These documents typically must be notarized and apostilled.

Referral – Based on the information you submit in your dossier; the foreign government will issue you an official referral of a child(ren) for adoption. Depending upon the country you are adopting from, you will either travel to the country to receive the referral and meet the child or you will receive information on the child including pictures and medicals prior to travel. Our social services team will discuss the referral with you to complete a referral review prior to your accepting the referral.

Court – For some countries, you will travel to the country for your court date where the judge will issue you the Adoption Decree and the adoption will be finalized. In other countries, the adoption is finalized overseas in court before you travel.

Post Adoption/Post Placement – You will be required to have Post Adoption/Post Placement reports completed by your home study agency. You will also provide pictures of your child with these reports, as specified by each individual country. Nightlight will present these reports and photos to the country on your behalf. During this time, Nightlight wants to equip you to be a successful adoptive parent.

What if we have not decided which country we will adopt from?

If possible, learn more about the countries through the internet (see Resources at the end of the FAQs), adoption groups, the agency and other adoptive families so you can make your decision. If you decide on a country and then change your mind after the completion of the home study and/or dossier, while not too difficult, there will likely be a delay in your adoption as you complete any additional forms or paperwork for the new dossier.

Will Nightlight allow us to pursue a domestic and international adoption simultaneously?

Nightlight requires 12 months in between placements of new children into your home. However, we recognize that the adoption process can be long and Nightlight does allow simultaneous family building under specific circumstances. Please speak with one of our adoption experts for more information regarding this policy.

Can we be undergoing fertility treatments while in the adoption process?

To be healthy adoptive parents, you need to have completed all your fertility treatments and given yourself the time necessary to grieve for the biological children you have dreamed of having. Only after this important step can you be truly ready to begin the adoption process. We do allow families to bank eggs or embryos for later use should you desire to continue fertility treatments at a later date.

What if we become pregnant during the adoption process?

Notify our office and your home study provider immediately. Again, we require 12 months between 2 children entering your home either through birth or adoption. You will speak with your adoption coordinator and depending on where you are in the process we may require you to go on hold until your child is born or of a certain age. The ultimate goal is to have a healthy environment for both your biological child and the newly adopted child.

What do you recommend we do to help prepare ourselves for an international adoption?

Learn your child's language (at least basic words and phrases) to make your child's transition into your family easier and help you communicate with your child during the first few months after your adoption as he/she is learning English. Learn about your child's country and culture so that you can ensure they do not lose their rich cultural heritage. Attend support groups and events either through the agency or in your area and talk with other families who have adopted children internationally. You may also want to begin your child's Lifebook.

What is an adoption home study?

A home study is an evaluation and education tool to help us, as an agency, and you, as adopting parents, to determine your preparedness to parent through adoption. It is not a psychological analysis; our intent is to prepare you for the special needs of an adoptee and to help you build important parenting skills. The home study is different for each adoption as everyone has different histories and experiences that they bring into the process. It consists of paperwork, education, and interviews. If you live in California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, or Texas, Nightlight Christian Adoptions will perform your home study. To learn more about the home study process, view our webpage; <https://www.nightlight.org/home-study-services/>

What is “the Hague”?

The Hague Convention is a program that governs the way international adoptions are conducted throughout the world. The United States ratified and implemented this program. It basically puts the decision making process and control in the hands of a central authority in each country that works in international adoptions. One of the major components of the Hague is the education of adoptive parents. Each prospective adoptive parent is required by Federal mandate, to take a minimum of 10 hours of education, in addition to the home study. So, it actually is a 'federal regulation' for anyone adopting internationally according to Hague Standard 96.48(b)(2).

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DOSSIER

What is a Dossier?

A dossier is a collection of required authenticated/legalized documents that is sent to a foreign country in order to process the adoption of a child in that country's legal system.

What documents are included in the dossier?

Each country has its own requirements as to specific documents and the number required; however, a dossier will typically consist of your home study, statement of your commitment to submit post-adoption reports, USCIS approval, copies of passports, marriage/birth certificates, medical clearances, employment verification, confirmation of housing and police clearances. Most countries require some type of notarization and authentication process.

What does authenticating or legalizing a document mean?

In order for the foreign court to recognize a document as legal, it requires the following:

Step 1 - The person signing the prepared document must have his/her signature notarized. A Notary Public certifies that they witnessed a specific person sign a specific document. The marriage or birth certificate has a certified signature by the state office where it is issued. The signature of the notary public is on file with the Secretary of State office in their state, allowing it to be authenticated (apostilled or certified depending on the country).

Step 2 – The notarized/certified document is then sent to the Secretary of State and an apostille or certification is attached, completing the authentication process (if the country you are adopting from is part of the Hague Treaty).

What steps are involved in authentication?

Documents issued in one country which need to be used in another country must be "authenticated" or "legalized" before they can be recognized as valid in the foreign country. All documents must be notarized, and then the notarized document is sent to the Secretary of State where they are apostilled (or certified).

What is a notary public?

A notary public has the legal authority to verify the signer's signature (i.e. confirm the identity of the person signing the document).

What is an apostille (ah-puh-steel)?

An apostille is an internationally recognized affidavit from a Secretary of State or Commonwealth that verifies that the notary public, or Clerk/Recorder, whose signature is subscribed to a document, is duly authorized to act as such in the state where the signature was performed.

QUESTIONS ABOUT REFERRALS OF CHILDREN**What are the typical ages of available children?**

18 months to 15 years. Typically, the children are first available for adoption in their home country and will likely be a minimum of 6 months old before being available for adoption. In addition, USCIS requires that a child be adopted before their 16th birthday for entry into the United States.

Are there any age restrictions placed on the adopting parents?

Our agency has a policy that maintains a 45-year age difference between the child and youngest parent. Each country also has its own requirements; please refer to the country descriptions for more information.

Is it possible to adopt unrelated children at the same time?

It is not possible to adopt unrelated children at the same time through OUR agency. It is our policy to place biological siblings together. If you are interested in adopting more than one child at the same time, there are many siblings in need of qualified families. In our program, we do not place unrelated children at the same time in the same family. If you wish to pursue another adoption after adopting one child, it is our policy to have the first child in your home a minimum of 1 year before proceeding on another adoption. This allows formation of attachment and bonding between your family and each child.

Will we be provided with medical records and a video? Will we know if the child has any major medical problems?

You will be provided with any available information on the child (including a medical report) when the child is referred to you. There are many common diagnoses that normally do not impact the future health and well-being of the children. However, it is important that you make the decision on which child to adopt yourself. If you are traveling to the country to receive the referral, such as in Ukraine, you will have the opportunity to interact with the child and ask questions of the orphanage staff. In some instances, you may also be able to make arrangements to have the child evaluated by an independent medical facility if you so desire.

Are we permitted to submit the medical information we receive to a physician specializing in international adoption for review?

After you receive the medical information, it is possible for you to have a physician review the medical. In fact, we do require that you have such a medical professional do this. If your child has a special medical condition, you may also want to have your child's medical report and profile reviewed by a specialist. While the child is still in the placing country, you *may* also be able to make arrangements for a physician to examine the child.

Nightlight provides a list of medical specialists who evaluate and care for internationally adopted children:
<http://www.nightlight.org/adoption-resource-library>

TRAVEL QUESTIONS**Once we arrive in country, are we met by a representative at the airport?**

In most of our country programs, you would be met at the airport and driven to your hotel. In most cases you will have a driver and/or translator with you for any adoption related trips (such as the orphanage and court). Depending on the time of year and how many families are traveling at a given time, the driver may also be able take you sightseeing. If you travel at the same time as another family, you can split their fees with the other family.

Do both spouses have to travel?

Most countries prefer and some require that both parents travel at least for part of the trip. It is always recommended that if one parent leaves early or travels by themselves (when allowed) that you take another trusted friend or family member with you. International travel can be difficult, you can get sick and it is also nice to just have someone to support you emotionally.

Can we bring our other children with us when we travel?

It depends. This may sound like a non-answer, but the question requires a rather complex look at the purpose of the trip(s), the country involved, the age of the child(ren) you are adopting, the age of your other child(ren), whether you will have another adult with you who can care for your child(ren) when they are unable to be with you, and other more subtle factors. So it shouldn't surprise you that one size doesn't fit all. We share the goal of making your adoption experience as positive and memorable as possible. Please discuss this question with your social worker or adoption service provider as well as Nightlight staff to better determine the right answer for you.

POST-PLACEMENT/ADOPTION QUESTIONS

How many post adoption reports are required?

It depends on which country you will be adopting from (see country description). Nightlight requires all families to have a brief post-adoption report conducted one month after placement of the child in the home to help families with any adjustment issues. Generally, you will be required to provide reports completed by a licensed adoption agency and pictures of your child every 6 months for up to 2-4 years after your adoption, or until your child is 18. However, be prepared to be flexible as government requirements sometimes change and you will be expected to fulfill the most recent requirement.

Why are we required to provide post-adoption reports?

Your child's country of origin simply wants to make sure that the children they place are happy and healthy in their new families. By requiring post-adoption reports they are able to watch your child grow and provide current information to your child's orphanage caretakers. In addition, these reports allow the government the ability to "prove" to the general population that in spite of rumors to the contrary, children adopted internationally are well taken care of and are happy in their new homes.

What kind of support services do you offer before, during and after placement?

In addition to your country coordinator, your home study provider and other agency personnel, we have a Post Adoption Connection Center. We have valuable resources on our website as well as very educated trained staff who can help you to work through any issues you may encounter once you return home with your family. We also hold reunions and other events throughout the year which allow families to get together and visit with friends they have made over the years. Classes also allow families to get to know each other and talk about their experiences adopting. In addition, we provide informational webinars and have extensive resource information.

FEES AND EXPENSES

What would you estimate the cost for the adoption to be?

Depending on the country you are adopting from, the age of the child and the number of required trips, your total estimated costs for an adoption can range from \$30,000 - \$55,000.

What are "Program Fees"?

Nightlight establishes a budget for costs each year based on the number of adoptions it estimates completing in each of its programs (domestic, international and embryo) during the year. Based on these estimates, we establish program fees for adoptions in the various programs, taking into consideration the amount of staff time and expenses which will be involved in maintaining the program for the year. Of course, it would be prohibitive to allocate all of the costs (payroll, rent, insurance, supplies, etc.) to one adoption in one program. Nevertheless, we will incur those costs even if the number of adoptions is less than we estimate. Therefore, we establish program

fees for each adoption program which we believe closely relates to our actual costs in running the program – not the actual time in completing or working on a specific adoption.

Why are fees paid, non-refundable?

Our program fees are paid in phases to enable families to budget their costs and to minimize the financial risk in the event that an adoption is not completed or a family withdraws from the program. The fee schedule provides for the costs to be paid at the time services are being rendered. As explained above, the program fees are established based on the costs to maintain a program, not on the time spent on each individual adoption.

Are my only other expenses my travel, accommodations, home study, USCIS and Embassy fees?

Those would be the majority of your other expenses. Also included in your out of pocket expenses would be your apostilles, gifts to the orphanage staff and children and driver/translator fees.

Is any portion of my fees tax deductible?

Most families who adopt are able to deduct adoption fees by using the adoption tax credit. While some countries do require donations, this varies from program to program. Please check with your program director to determine what portion of your fees are considered a donation for the care of children remaining in orphanages overseas.

What are the fees to adopt a second child?

Biological siblings may be adopted from many of our programs. The fees for siblings will vary depending on the country. Please contact the country program coordinator for details or refer to the fee booklets.

Are we required to take large sums of American currency with us, or does Nightlight wire the money?

Monies are usually wired before travel. If you decide to work with us, we will cover this information with you pre-travel.

Is there financial assistance available?

- **Tax Credit**

Tax Benefits for Adoption has opened up a window of opportunity for many families who previously found the financial obstacles to adopting to be insurmountable. For more information about the tax credit and other financial resources go to: <http://www.nightlight.org/funding-your-adoption>. We also recommend that you discuss the tax credit with your CPA at the time of filing your taxes. You can also read more about the adoption tax credit at <http://adoptiontaxcredit.org/>

- **Employee Benefits**

Many companies offer employer-provided adoption benefits. The company may reimburse you for some of your adoption expenses. Check with your human resource department to see if your company provides adoption benefits.

If your company has employer-provided adoption assistance, you can receive up to \$13,170 in tax-free income. Also, your employer can reduce your salary to pay the adoption benefit so that you can receive \$13,170 in tax-free income.

In addition to receiving tax-free income, you can also receive up to \$13,170 as a tax credit for your remaining adoption expenses. So as long as your adoption expenses are \$26,340 or more, you may be able to receive the full employer-provided benefits as well as the full tax credit/refund. Some employers also offer paid leave of absence for those adopting. Most companies are required by law to offer you unpaid time when you adopt through the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

- **Employer Donation Matching**

In addition to ways that you can find funding for adoption, we want to make you aware of ways that you can support Nightlight. Because Nightlight is a non-profit organization, a portion of your fees is

considered a tax-deductible donation. If you have paid fees/donations to Nightlight, please consider asking your employer to provide a grant to Nightlight to match your donation. This donation would be a general donation to offset other Nightlight costs and allow us to expand the services we provide to orphans and birth parents around the world. You can see a list of employers who make matching donations at: <http://www.nightlight.org/donation-opportunities>. Please know that this is not a comprehensive list of employers and you should definitely check with your HR department if your company is not listed at this link.

If your employer requires you to make donations through United Way, you can direct your Nightlight donation by:

- 1) Requesting a Donor Choice Form from your United Way coordinator
- 2) Under the section titled, "Specific Care" write in:

Nightlight Christian Adoptions
1528 Brookhollow Dr. #100
Santa Ana, CA 92705

- **Adoption Grants, Loans and other forms of financial assistance**

Nightlight provides a full guide to financial resources. <https://www.nightlight.org/wp-content/uploads/Tax-Resources-WEB-2014-Final.pdf>

HAGUE RESOURCES

Since you are considering adopting internationally, please read: Hague VS. Non Hague Country Adoptions: <https://adoptioncouncil.org/content/uploads/2020/11/Hague-v.-Non-Hague-Country-Fact-Sheet-.pdf>

World Health Organization on International Travel and Health: <http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

ADDITIONAL ADOPTION RESOURCES <http://www.nightlight.org/adoption-resource-library>

If you have any questions that were not addressed in the FAQs or you would like to talk with other families who have adopted through our agency, please contact our office by phone at (502) 423-5780, or by e-mail at info@nightlight.org