



**Member Agencies' Standards of Practice
Revised in February/March, '09**

Member Agency's Philosophy of Practice:

Believe children need permanent, loving families in order to reach their full potential.

Believe that children deprived of this permanent, loving care suffer long-lasting effects.

Believe that when there is no family in the child's country able to care for the child permanently and without undue delay, then international adoption may be an excellent option.

Believe that international adoption is a child welfare service that focuses on the best interests of the child.

Member Agency's Core Values:

1. Adhere to ethical and professional practices and decisions regarding inter-country adoption, including maintaining the focus on the best interest of each child;
2. Follow a professional standard of practice based on integrity, honesty, transparency, and professional delivery of service;
3. Respect ethical communication boundaries between agencies;
4. Support in-country adoption services and the preservation of the family, whether in the U.S. or another country;
5. Work with reputable, ethical organizations and individuals;
6. Adhere and comply with relevant laws, regulations, and policies pertaining to adoption-related services:
 - a. Refrain from posting photos of children on web sites if prohibited by sending country;
 - b. Assign children only to families who have a completed home study;
 - c. Protect confidentiality of all children;
 - d. Work collaboratively to share adoption information regarding current procedures in the U.S. and abroad;



JOINT COUNCIL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

- e. Work collaboratively to share resources for assistance and opportunities to support child welfare sectors of sending countries.
7. Promote and support ethical standards of child welfare practice in all countries where an agency works;
8. Abide by country-specific Standards of Practice in specific countries where standards have been created by a government or by JCICS;
9. Ensure that humanitarian aid provided does not create a conflict of interest or preferential treatment to any party;
10. Encourage cooperative work among agencies to support and promote humanitarian aid and projects that benefit children;
11. Have written policies and procedures that recognize and respect the rights of all members of the adoption triad;
12. Provide prospective clients with written policies and procedures that outline the agency's responsibilities;
13. Provide prospective clients with a grievance policy;
14. Encourage ongoing education and professional development of agency staff;
15. Encourage staff participation in professional organizations;
16. Resolve in writing any professional problems or issues of practice;
17. Release of confidential case material shall be done with the informed written consent of relevant parties, in conformity with State, Federal, and international legal parameters;
18. Understand that failure to comply with standards of practice may result in disciplinary action pursuant to the JCICS Grievance Process and Disciplinary Policy.



JOINT COUNCIL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Member Agency's Financial Practice:

1. Prior to acceptance of any fees, provide all applicants:
 - a. Provide prospective clients with written policies and procedures regarding financial obligations and a schedule of current estimated fees and expenses;
 - b. A statement of when and how fees are paid, including any circumstances under which fees or expenses may be increased, waived, reduced, or refunded.
2. Describe other expenses, including but not limited to, immigration, travel and legal fees;
3. Prohibit the use of payments or other material transactions meant to induce or encourage the release of a child for the purpose of adoption;
4. Prohibit financial incentive as a motivation for adoptive placements;
5. Prohibit contingency fees on a "per child" basis or any payments that promote preferential treatment and corrupt practices regarding children;
6. Payment for placement services shall be based on the time and work involved;
7. Provide or make available an Annual Report upon request for this information;
8. Have ongoing professional liability insurance.

Member Agencies Pre-Adoption Services:

1. Provide clients with written information about policies and procedures related to all services provided by the agency;
2. Provide prospective clients with full, updated and accurate information about agency programs, including anticipated waiting times, costs, risks, and uncertainties inherent in international adoption and updates of information if changes occur;



JOINT COUNCIL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

3. Disclose to clients in writing the nature of their association with:
 - a. Separate home study/post placement provider;
 - b. Foreign or domestic entity placing children from a selected program.
4. Require each new adopting parent to receive a minimum of 10 hours of pre-adoption education, not including that which is provided during the home study meetings with social workers and other agency personnel;
5. Provide pre-adoption preparation that includes common issues that effect most adoptions, such as: legalities, health, institutional care, psychosocial development, attachment, and emotional and/or cultural concerns;
6. Provide a thorough assessment of the suitability of prospective parents for adoption. Based on this assessment, the home study document shall include a recommendation regarding the nationality, age range, health and other special circumstances of the child/children to be placed;
7. Provide accurate information about adoptive parents to all other agencies or entities involved in an adoption. This includes the U.S. government and governments of the clients' selected country/program;
8. Adhere to confidentiality practices including signed agreements/releases of information.

Member Agencies Placement Services:

1. Place siblings together except when in the best interest of all children indicates otherwise;
2. Place only one child or one sibling group with a family during a one year period. Exceptions may be granted in special circumstances when it is deemed in the best interest of all for this to occur;
3. Simultaneous placement of unrelated children should not be made except in special circumstances where it can be established that this is in the best interest of each child and the social worker can prepare parents for the complex issues involved;
4. Adhere to regulations of sending countries regarding the promotion of adoptive placement abroad within cultural, legal or court boundaries.



JOINT COUNCIL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

5. Keep abreast of state department travel advisories or warnings and encourage prospective parents to do the same;
6. Be aware of changes in foreign adoption laws that affect inter-country adoptions and expeditiously inform clients of these changes;
7. Provide home study agency with all information received pertaining to a referred child to be presented to adoptive parents prior to the referral being given to the prospective adoptive parents;
8. When documents regarding a child are in a foreign language, make translated copies available to prospective parents. In addition, include copies of documents in the original language;
9. Advise prospective parents that all documentation and/or translations may not be entirely accurate or complete;
10. Maintain a list of knowledgeable medical resources regarding health-related issues. Refer families to these places for evaluation of a child's referral information;
11. Allow clients a set a reasonable period of time to make a decision regarding the acceptance of a referred child or siblings;
12. Provide support to prospective parents throughout the process;
13. Maintain a permanent record of all information about a child placed through the agency;
14. Provide adopting parents who are making required overseas trips assistance with:
 - a. Receiving the child;
 - b. Attending meetings and hearings to complete an adoption;
 - c. Required CIS paperwork;
 - d. Appropriate US consulate telephone contact information
 - e. 24 hour agency emergency contact information.
15. Notification to home study agency of the pending and actual arrival of the child.



JOINT COUNCIL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Post Adoption Practice of Member Agencies:

1. Provide Post Adoption Services;
2. Advise families to obtain a medical evaluation of a child within 3 weeks of a child's arrival and consult with the pediatrician regarding inoculations or any other invasive treatment until the child has made an adjustment to their new home;
3. To the extent possible, ensure clients have access to legal information regarding the adoption and finalization regulations of the foreign country and the United States;
4. Provide clients with information regarding their child's citizenship status;
5. Comply with U.S. and a foreign government's post-placement and post adoption requirements;
6. Provide additional documentation received to adoptive parents at any time after the child's placement;
7. Attempt to find answers in response to parents' questions as quickly as possible within a reasonable time period;
8. Encourage, support and facilitate the education and celebration of each child's cultural heritage;
9. Provide or refer clients to counseling, respite, or other therapeutic services as needed by the child and family;
10. Provide adult adoptee with information, regulations and/or contacts that may assist them in a state or country of origin regarding a search and/or reunion with a birth family;
11. Maintain written procedures for the management of family crises and recommendations for seeking appropriate professional resources.



JOINT COUNCIL STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

Relationships of Member Agencies:

1. Delineate agency responsibilities in a written service agreement that shall include:
 - a. Statements on establishing lines of communication;
 - b. Disclosure of referral information and all other information regarding a child;
 - c. Expectation regarding notification of a child's arrival;
 - d. Expectation for specific post-placement services.
2. Provide written expectation of intervention procedures in the event of a family crisis;
3. Provide written agreement regarding expectations for counseling and services to the prospective adoptive family;
4. When clients are working with more than one agency on an adoption, each agency should notify the others immediately if there are changes in the agency or family status;
5. Act promptly and in accord with any applicable legal requirements regarding a voluntary or involuntary disruption or dissolution of a placement, including but not limited to:
 - a. Decisions regarding the removal of a child from the home;
 - b. Custody of the child;
 - c. Arranging for legal process and subsequent temporary and/or permanent placement of a child.