

## **UKRAINE ADOPTION PROGRAM**

### **Qualifications for Adopting from Ukraine**

#### **U.S. Requirements:**

- 1) You must be a U.S. citizen. If you are married, your spouse must also be either a U.S. citizen or have legal status in the United States.
- 2) If you are unmarried, you must be at least 25 years old.
- 3) You cannot currently be on probation or parole.

#### **Texas Requirements:**

- 1) You cannot have a felony conviction against a person.
- 2) You cannot have a child abuse referral with a finding of “sustained or unable to determine.”

#### **Ukraine Requirements:**

- 1) Only married couples can adopt.
- 2) Under a Ukrainian law which came into effect on October 4, 2011 prospective adoptive parents must be at least 21 years old, and at least 15 years older than the adopted child
- 3) There are no restrictions regarding the number of children already in the family’s home or the length of a couple’s marriage.
- 4) To be eligible for international adoption in Ukraine, and to be matched with a child with no known medical, physical, or mental conditions: a child must be at least 5 years of age or have a sibling over 5 years old. Children under age five with special needs may be considered for international adoption. Prior to this age, children are registered with the government and available only for domestic adoption.
- 5) Families may adopt more than one child at a time as long as they receive home study and USCIS approval to do so.

**IN COUNTRY PROVIDER:** Hope International works with a local facilitator in Kiev who handles all of the in-country processes. He has over 20 years of experience with international adoptions from Ukraine to the U.S. Either the facilitator or one of his translators will travel with the family to all government appointments and court and collect all the necessary documents for court and the U.S. Visa appointment. The facilitator keeps watch over all families in country until they head home with their adoption completed.

**TIME FRAME:** About 3 months from submittal of the dossier to travel

**THE CHILDREN:** Children are primarily of Caucasian descent and range in age from six years to teens unless they are part of a sibling group or have an identified special need.

**PROCESS OF ADOPTING FROM UKRAINE:** As with all our adoption programs, you must first participate in a general information meeting prior to contracting with the agency. This can be done via telephone for families who reside outside of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Once this meeting has taken place and you decide to work with Hope International, then you can submit an Application. Next the Executive Director will prepare the contracting documents. Once you have reviewed and signed the contracts and paid the initial agency fees, we immediately begin working on your home study, foreign dossier, and USCIS approval. Our agency strives to offer the fullest level of support and services possible – even sending for apostilles and document authentications on your behalf in order to complete your adoption dossier in the quickest manner possible. While there are many aspects outside of our control with adoption and foreign adoptions in particular, we have found during our years of experience that our hard work on things we can control - paperwork, preparing and authenticating dossiers, etc. – usually quickens your overall adoption process.

1. **Completion of an international home study** – For families that live in Texas, Hope International will conduct the home study. If you live outside of Texas, we will assist you to find an agency to conduct your home study. Hope International must supervise this agency which must meet the standards for a Hague approved supervised provider. Your final USCIS approval is contingent upon the recommendation for approval given by your home study agent. Your completed home study is valid for 12 months; an update will be necessary annually until a child is placed in your home and is also required if your living circumstances change prior to your adoption, such as change in employment or residence. You are also required to obtain at least ten hours of pre-adoptive training. We will assist you with referrals for this training.

2. **Apply to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)** – USCIS must pre-approve you as potential adoptive parents regarding an international adoption. Hope will assist you by submitting an I-600A application to USCIS on your behalf once your home study is completed. USCIS must approve your ability to provide proper parental care for a child. Your USCIS approval will be valid for 18 months.

3. **Completion of a dossier** – Once you have completed the home study and submitted your application to USCIS, you are ready to work on the remainder of your dossier documents. Your dossier consists of all the documents necessary for processing your adoption in Ukraine. Hope will assist you as you gather all the necessary documents. We will go over the preparation of your dossier in detail and will send all your documents for authentication as needed. Most dossier documents require authentication through notarization and they will need an apostille. Once you receive USCIS approval then your dossier is ready to go to Ukraine for translation. Once your dossier has been completed, we will forward it to our foreign coordinator who will translate the dossier and then submit it to the DAP, the central adoption authority in Ukraine.

4. **Traveling to Ukraine and Child Match** – You may be able to travel 3-5 months after completing your dossier. Because of Ukrainian law, pre-travel videos and photographs of children are *not* available. The DAP maintains the database of adoptable children available for intercountry adoptions. If you are eligible to adopt, and the DAP approves your application, you will receive an appointment (invitation) to visit the DAP. At this appointment, DAP officials will show you information about orphans eligible for intercountry adoption and issue a letter of referral to allow

you to visit an orphanage to meet and establish contact with a child and check his or her medical records. The presence of both parents is required for the appearance in the adoption center and the court hearing. The DAP will allow only three appointments for each adoptive family to look at the children's files. If you have not chosen a child after the third appointment, your adoption dossier will be returned to you immediately.

Following the visit to the DAP once you have identified a child that you believe is a good potential match for your family, you will travel with an escort/translator to the town where the child is located. You will make a decision about adopting a specific child only after seeing the child in person and reviewing medical and developmental information.

During this stage, you can choose to hire a doctor to visit the orphanage with you to assist in determining the child's health and development, and you can also correspond with doctors in the U.S. via phone, fax, and e-mail. We very strongly encourage you to seek any and all available medical consultation available to you in assessing the child's health and in making this important decision. Once a doctor has given you their evaluation of the child's referral information you will notify the DAP and Hope of your decision about adopting this particular child. You will have at least two weeks to consider the referral information, barring extenuating circumstances and based on the child's need for a more immediate response.

**5. Adopting your child in Ukraine** – After choosing a child, it takes 2 to 3 weeks to appear in court for a hearing; while you are waiting you will be visiting your child in the orphanage. After court, the judge's decision will not take effect for 30 days. During those 30 days, the adoption can be appealed. If an appeal application is submitted, an additional 20-day period is granted for the appellant to file his/her complete appeal. This additional time can be shortened or waived by the court. After court you can decide if you want to stay to complete the adoption process, in which case you will have one long trip of up to 10 weeks. You may also choose to both return to the U.S. and one or both of you return in 5 weeks to complete the final paperwork for the U.S. Embassy to receive the child's visa. This second trip could take about 1-2 weeks.

**6. Obtaining your child's visa** – To request a visa appointment with the U.S. Embassy in Kiev, there is a lot of paperwork to be gathered. You first must obtain and translate the adoption decree and then apply for the child's birth certificate and passport with your name as parents. Then you complete the I-600 Petition and submit it to the U.S. Embassy in Kiev. Once approved, you complete the online DS-260 Visa form and submit it along with all required documents to the U.S. Embassy requesting an interview. Once you have a scheduled appointment, but prior to the visa appointment, the child must obtain a visa medical exam at an approved clinic. The U.S. Embassy must receive the full package with medical information from the clinic prior to the visa interview.

**7. Preparing to travel** – You do not need a visa to enter Ukraine for visits up to 90 days in any 180-day period for tourist or business purposes without a visa. However, you must provide proof of valid health insurance and sufficient funds for the duration of your stay. Some immunizations are recommended by the CDC to travel to Ukraine. Upon arrival, you will be welcomed by a guide and led through each step of the adoption process.

**8. Post-adoption supervision** – Upon returning to the U.S., adoptive parents must register their child with the Ukrainian Consulate in the U.S. within 30 days. Families must also submit post-

adoption reports to the Ukrainian Consulate annually for the first three years and then every third year until the child is 18 years old. For the first six months following placement, Hope International or your home study agency will provide post-placement supervision as required by the State of Texas or your state of residence. At the completion of the initial six-month post-placement period, you will be ready to proceed with your registration of foreign decree or re-adoption. Hope International will help facilitate this process for Texas families. If you reside outside of Texas, we recommend that you contact a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) regarding the completion of a registration or re-adoption in your state, if needed.

**9. Certificate of Citizenship** – Since adoptions are finalized in Ukraine, your child most likely traveled home on an IR-3 Visa, so you will receive the Certificate of Citizenship automatically within about 90 days. If your child traveled home on an IR-4 Visa, the adoption will have to be finalized in a U.S. court, and then you can apply for the Certificate of Citizenship.

**For further information please contact Hope International:  
5944 Luther Lane, Suite 875, Dallas, TX 75225;  
214-672-9399; [dford@hopeadoption.org](mailto:dford@hopeadoption.org)**