

maintenance of evaluators and for any additional administrative costs to the accrediting entity. In such a case, the accrediting entity may estimate the additional fees and may require that the estimated amount be paid in advance, subject to a refund of any overcharge. Temporary accreditation may be denied or withdrawn if the estimated fees are not paid.

(b) An accrediting entity must make its schedule of fees available to the public, including prospective applicants for temporary accreditation, upon request. At the time of application, the accrediting entity must specify the fees to be charged in a contract between the parties and must provide notice to the applicant that no portion of the fee will be refunded if the applicant fails to become temporarily accredited.

PART 97—ISSUANCE OF ADOPTION CERTIFICATES AND CUSTODY DECLARATIONS IN HAGUE CONVENTION ADOPTION CASES

Sec.

97.1 Definitions.

97.2 Application for a Hague Adoption Certificate or a Hague Custody Declaration (outgoing Convention case).

97.3 Requirements subject to verification in an outgoing Convention case.

97.4 Issuance of a Hague Adoption Certificate or a Hague Custody Declaration (outgoing Convention case).

97.5 Certification of Hague Convention Compliance in an incoming Convention case where final adoption occurs in the United States.

97.6–97.7 [Reserved]

AUTHORITY: Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (done at The Hague, May 29, 1993), S. Treaty Doc. 105-51 (1998); 1870 U.N.T.S. 167 (Reg. No. 31922 (1993)); Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, 42 U.S.C. 14901–14954.

SOURCE: 71 FR 64456, Nov. 2, 2006, unless otherwise noted.

§ 97.1 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) *Adoption Court* means the State court with jurisdiction over the adoption or the grant of custody for purpose of adoption.

(b) *U.S. Authorized Entity* means a public domestic authority or an agency or person that is accredited or temporarily accredited or approved by an accrediting entity pursuant to 22 CFR part 96, or a supervised provider acting under the supervision and responsibility of an accredited agency or temporarily accredited agency or approved person.

(c) *Foreign Authorized Entity* means a foreign Central Authority or an accredited body or entity other than the Central Authority authorized by the relevant foreign country to perform Central Authority functions in a Convention adoption case.

(d) *Hague Adoption Certificate* means a certificate issued by the Secretary in an outgoing case (where the child is emigrating from the United States to another Convention country) certifying that a child has been adopted in the United States in accordance with the Convention and, except as provided in § 97.4(b), the IAA.

(e) *Hague Custody Declaration* means a declaration issued by the Secretary in an outgoing case (where the child is emigrating from the United States to another Convention country) declaring that custody of a child for purposes of adoption has been granted in the United States in accordance with the Convention and, except as provided in § 97.4(b), the IAA.

(f) Terms defined in 22 CFR 96.2 have the meaning given to them therein.

§ 97.2 Application for a Hague Adoption Certificate or a Hague Custody Declaration (outgoing Convention case).

(a) Once the Convention has entered into force for the United States, any party to an outgoing Convention adoption or custody proceeding may apply to the Secretary for a Hague Adoption Certificate or a Hague Custody Declaration. Any other interested person may also make such application, but such application will not be processed unless such applicant demonstrates that a Hague Adoption Certificate or Hague Custody Declaration is needed to obtain a legal benefit or for purposes of a legal proceeding, as determined by the Secretary in the Secretary's discretion.

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(b) Applicants for a Hague Adoption Certificate or Hague Custody Declaration shall submit to the Secretary:

(1) A completed application form in such form as the Secretary may prescribe, with any required fee;

(2) An official copy of the order of the adoption court finding that the child is eligible for adoption and that the adoption or proposed adoption is in the child's best interests and granting the adoption or custody for purposes of adoption;

(3) An official copy of the adoption court's findings (either in the order granting the adoption or custody for purposes of adoption or separately) verifying, in substance, that each of the requirements of § 97.3 has been complied with or, if the adoption court has not verified compliance with a particular requirement in § 97.3, authenticated documentation showing that such requirement nevertheless has been met and a written explanation of why the adoption court's verification of compliance with the requirement cannot be submitted; and

(4) Such additional documentation and information as the Secretary may request at the Secretary's discretion.

(c) If the applicant fails to submit all of the documentation and information required pursuant to paragraph (b)(4) of this section within 120 days of the Secretary's request, the Secretary may consider the application abandoned.

§ 97.3 Requirements subject to verification in an outgoing Convention case.

(a) *Preparation of child background study.* An accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, or public domestic authority must complete or approve a child background study that includes information about the child's identity, adoptability, background, social environment, family history, medical history (including that of the child's family), and any special needs of the child.

(b) *Transmission of child data.* A U.S. authorized entity must conclude that the child is eligible for adoption and, without revealing the identity of the birth mother or the birth father if these identities may not be disclosed under applicable State law, transmit to

a foreign authorized entity the background study, proof that the necessary consents have been obtained, and the reason for its determination that the proposed placement is in the child's best interests, based on the home study and child background study and giving due consideration to the child's upbringing and his or her ethnic, religious, and cultural background.

(c) *Reasonable efforts to find domestic placement.* Reasonable efforts pursuant to 22 CFR 96.54 must be made to actively recruit and make a diligent search for prospective adoptive parent(s) to adopt the child in the United States and a timely adoptive placement in the United States not found.

(d) *Preparation and transmission of home study.* A U.S. authorized entity must receive from a foreign authorized entity a home study on the prospective adoptive parent(s) prepared in accordance with the laws of the receiving country, under the responsibility of a foreign Central Authority, foreign accredited body, or public foreign authority, that includes:

(1) Information on the prospective adoptive parent(s)' identity, eligibility, and suitability to adopt, background, family and medical history, social environment, reasons for adoption, ability to undertake an intercountry adoption, and the characteristics of the children for whom they would be qualified to care;

(2) Confirmation that a competent authority has determined that the prospective adoptive parent(s) are eligible and suited to adopt and has ensured that the prospective adoptive parent(s) have been counseled as necessary; and

(3) The results of a criminal background check.

(e) *Authorization to enter.* The Central Authority or other competent authority of the receiving country must declare that the child will be authorized to enter and reside in the receiving country permanently or on the same basis as the adopting parent(s).

(f) *Consent by foreign authorized entity.* A foreign authorized entity or competent authority must declare that it consents to the adoption, if its consent is necessary under the law of the relevant foreign country for the adoption to become final.

(g) *Guardian counseling and consent.* Each person, institution, and authority (other than the child) whose consent is necessary for the adoption must be counseled as necessary and duly informed of the effects of the consent (including whether or not an adoption will terminate the legal relationship between the child and his or her family of origin); must freely give consent expressed or evidenced in writing in the required legal form without any inducement by compensation of any kind; and consent must not have been subsequently withdrawn. If the consent of the mother is required, it may be given only after the birth of the child.

(h) *Child counseling and consent.* As appropriate in light of the child's age and maturity, the child must be counseled and informed of the effects of the adoption and the child's views must be considered. If the child's consent is required, the child must also be counseled and informed of the effects of granting consent, and must freely give consent expressed or evidenced in writing in the required legal form without any inducement by compensation of any kind.

(i) *Authorized entity duties.* A U.S. authorized entity must:

(1) Ensure that the prospective adoptive parent(s) agree to the adoption;

(2) Agree, together with a foreign authorized entity, that the adoption may proceed;

(3) Take all appropriate measures to ensure that the transfer of the child takes place in secure and appropriate circumstances and, if possible, in the company of the adoptive parent(s) or the prospective adoptive parent(s), and arrange to obtain permission for the child to leave the United States; and

(4) Arrange to keep a foreign authorized entity informed about the adoption process and the measures taken to complete it, as well as about the progress of the placement if a probationary period is required; to return the home study and the child background study to the authorities that forwarded them if the transfer of the child does not take place; and to be consulted in the event a new placement or alternative long-term care for the child is required.

(j) *Contacts.* Unless the child is being adopted by a relative, there may be no contact between the prospective adoptive parent(s) and the child's birthparent(s) or any other person who has care of the child prior to the competent authority's determination that the prospective adoptive parent(s) are eligible and suited to adopt and the adoption court's determinations that the child is eligible for adoption, that the requirements in paragraphs (c) and (g) of this section have been met, and that an intercountry adoption is in the child's best interests, *provided that* this prohibition on contacts shall not apply if the relevant State or public domestic authority has established conditions under which such contact may occur and any such contact occurred in accordance with such conditions.

(k) *Improper financial gain.* No one may derive improper financial or other gain from an activity related to the adoption, and only costs and expenses (including reasonable professional fees of persons involved in the adoption) may be charged or paid.

§97.4 Issuance of a Hague Adoption Certificate or a Hague Custody Declaration (outgoing Convention case).

(a) Once the Convention has entered into force for the United States, the Secretary shall issue a Hague Adoption Certificate or a Hague Custody Declaration if the Secretary, in the Secretary's discretion, is satisfied that the adoption or grant of custody was made in compliance with the Convention and the IAA.

(b) If compliance with the Convention can be certified but it is not possible to certify compliance with the IAA, the Secretary personally may authorize issuance of an appropriately modified Hague Adoption Certificate or Hague Custody Declaration, in the interests of justice or to prevent grave physical harm to the child.

§97.5 Certification of Hague Convention Compliance in an incoming convention case where final adoption occurs in the United States.

(a) Once the Convention has entered into force for the United States, any person may request the Secretary to certify that a Convention adoption in

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an incoming case finalized in the United States was done in accordance with the Convention.

(b) Persons seeking such a certification must submit the following documentation:

(1) A copy of the certificate issued by a consular officer pursuant to 22 CFR 42.24(j) certifying that the granting of custody of the child has occurred in compliance with the Convention;

(2) An official copy of the adoption court's order granting the final adoption; and

(3) Such additional documentation and information as the Secretary may request at the Secretary's discretion.

(c) If a person seeking the certification described in paragraph (a) of this section fails to submit all the documentation and information required pursuant to paragraph (b) of this section within 120 days of the Secretary's request, the Department may consider the request abandoned.

(d) The Secretary may issue the certification if the Secretary, in the Secretary's discretion, is satisfied that the adoption was made in compliance with the Convention. The Secretary may decline to issue a certification, including to a party to the adoption, in the Secretary's discretion. A certification will not be issued to a non-party requestor unless the requestor demonstrates that the certification is needed to obtain a legal benefit or for purposes of a legal proceeding, as determined by the Secretary in the Secretary's discretion.

(e) A State court's final adoption decree, when based upon the certificate issued by a consular officer pursuant to 22 CFR 42.24(j), certifying that the grant of custody of the child has occurred in compliance with the Convention, or upon its determination that the requirements of Article 17 of the Convention have been met constitutes the certification of the adoption under Article 23 of the Convention.

§§ 97.6–97.7 [Reserved]

PART 98—INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION—CONVENTION RECORD PRESERVATION

Sec.

98.1 Definitions.

98.2 Preservation of Convention records.

AUTHORITY: Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (done at The Hague, May 29, 1993), S. Treaty Doc. 105-51 (1998); 1870 U.N.T.S. 167 (Reg. No. 31922 (1993)); Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, 42 U.S.C. 14901-14954.

SOURCE: 71 FR 8164, Feb. 15, 2006, unless otherwise noted.

§ 98.1 Definitions.

As used in this part:

(a) Convention means the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, done at The Hague on May 29, 1993.

(b) Convention record means any item, collection, or grouping of information contained in an electronic or physical document, an electronic collection of data (including the information contained in the Case Registry), a photograph, an audio or video tape, or any other information storage medium of any type whatever that contains information about a specific past, current, or prospective adoption covered by the Convention (regardless of whether the adoption was made final) that has been generated or received by the Secretary or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Convention record includes a record, generated or received by the Secretary or DHS, about a specific adoption case involving two Convention countries other than the United States in connection with which the Secretary or DHS performs a Central Authority function.

(c) Such other terms as are defined in 22 CFR 96.2 shall have the meaning given to them therein.

§ 98.2 Preservation of Convention records.

Once the Convention has entered into force for the United States, the Secretary and DHS will preserve, or require the preservation of, Convention records for a period of not less than 75 years. For Convention records involving a child who is immigrating to the United States and Convention records involving a child who is emigrating from the United States, the 75-year period shall start on the date that the Secretary or DHS generates or receives