

## AGENCY POLICIES

Appendix to Program Statement

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### ADOPTION ELIGIBILITY

This agency seeks to advance the welfare of children throughout the adoptive placement process. Therefore, the agency will employ the following adoptive parent eligibility criteria:

Heterosexual couples who have been married for at least one year are eligible for domestic and international adoption. Single heterosexual women are eligible for international adoption. The sexual orientation of applicants will be assessed during the adoptive home study.

The agency will deny applications of persons:

- who have been divorced more than two times
- whose sexual orientation is other than heterosexual
- who are not married and are cohabitating with another person of the opposite gender
- who have been convicted of a felony
- who have any pending criminal charges
- who have any substantiated abuse or neglect charges
- who abuse alcohol or other substances

The agency reserves the right to deny applications of persons:

- who have any misdemeanor convictions
- who have been accused of abuse or neglect
- who have a significant medical condition
- who exhibit any behaviors, past or present, that are assessed to be detrimental to the well-being of the child or the family unit

In addition, applicants for international adoption must also satisfy the eligibility requirements of each country of interest.

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### CHILD SPACING

The agency requires that the placement of a child(ren) in an adoptive home provide at minimum a nine month age range between the adopted child and the other children in the home, and that the age of the child being placed be under the youngest child currently in the home. The purpose of this is to preserve the birth order, assure differential grade placements in their schooling, and minimize comparison and competition between siblings. Likewise, when adopting more than one child, unrelated adoptees and the existing children in the home must be at least nine months apart in age.

The decision to place a child with a family not meeting the child spacing policy will be made according to the professional judgment of agency staff.

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### SUBSEQUENT (ADOPTIONS)

AAI requires that each adoptive family allow a transition time of one year between the placement of an adopted child or birth of a biological child into the home before adding another child to the family. We recognize that circumstances for each family situation are different and so encourage you to consult with your caseworker as to the right timing for you to begin the application process. Your caseworker will be a valuable resource in assessing your family's transition and readiness to proceed with a subsequent adoption.

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### ESCORTING

Escorting is possible in some international programs, although the agency strongly recommends that parents travel to bring their child home. Escorting will only be made available according to the professional judgment of agency staff when there are compelling reasons to do so.

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## HOME STUDY/HOME STUDY UPDATES/HOME STUDY ADDENDUMS

All home studies, updates, and addendums must be completed by a licensed adoption agency in the family's state of residence. For international families, in the event that the family's USCIS approval expires before the placement of a child, a home study update will be required. If this agency completed the family's original home study, the agency will complete the home study update. The family will need to obtain new clearances, medicals, reference letters, and any other materials asked for by their home study caseworker. A visit with all family members in the home will also be required. Please see the fee schedule for applicable fees. If the family's home study was completed by a different agency, the family will be responsible for contacting their home study agency to complete the update and will be responsible for all costs incurred.

In the event that a significant change occurs in the family's life, or if the family wishes to be approved for, or the agency wishes to approve the family for a child with different characteristics than stated in the original home study, a home study addendum will be required. If this agency completed the family's original home study, then we will complete the home study addendum. If there is a new member of the household, the caseworker will visit all members of the household and the family must obtain a medical for said person. In the event of a change of residence, the caseworker will visit all members of the household at the new residence. When a job change has occurred, the caseworker will speak with the family by phone and the family will provide the agency with a letter from the new employer. The agency may require additional documentation or visits with the family at the agency's own discretion and will charge the family for addendums completed as a result of a change initiated by the family. If the family's home study was completed by a different agency, the family will be responsible for contacting their home study agency to complete the addendum and will be responsible for all costs incurred.

If using this agency for a home study only, all home study services will be billed according to applicable fee schedules, including all updates and addendums.

Adoption Associates, Inc. will not complete a home study for families seeking an independent adoption.

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## MEDICAL CARE

The agency will place children only into homes with parents who agree to seek medical attention when necessary for the child. In addition, parents must agree not to withhold medical treatment for the child against the advice of medical personnel.

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## DISCIPLINE POLICY

The agency will thoroughly assess the prospective adoptive parent's approach to child discipline as part of the home study process. There is substantial and compelling research to indicate that corporal punishment generally has a negative and harmful impact on children. Alternately, there are positive and affirmative forms of discipline that should be utilized instead. The agency will provide educational resources to prospective clients as requested and when concerns arise. The agency reserves the right to deny approval of the client's home study if the parents' approach to child discipline is deemed inappropriate by the agency.

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## NON-DISCLOSURE POLICY

This agency takes nondisclosure of arrests, convictions, unsubstantiated/substantiated incidents of child abuse or neglect, and significant medical issues very seriously. If the prospective client does not disclose said issues on the formal application, this could result in possible denial of the application or rescission of the adoptive home study—if already completed.

The agency understands and acknowledges prospective adoptive clients may be apprehensive to disclose such incidents, but a criminal record, including an expunged record, will almost certainly be discovered through required state and FBI background checks. Medical issues can be discovered by required forms from the client's doctor. If these issues are not disclosed to the agency by the prospective adoptive client, it can result in feelings of mistrust between agency and client.

Disclosure of incidents can save time by allowing the agency to direct prospective clients away from programs or countries who may not be accepting of even seemingly minor criminal or medical issues. Disclosure allows the agency to inform prospective clients about additional

documentation that may be required to provide to the court or cooperative agency, or in the case of international adoptions, to the USCIS or the source country. This can save valuable time for the client and the agency.

In the event that a prospective adoptive parent, immediate family member, or resident of the home is arrested, convicted of a crime, accused of child abuse or neglect, or diagnosed with a significant medical issue during the adoption process, such incidents or issues must be disclosed to the agency within 24 hours.

The ultimate determination to either terminate, hold, or continue the case will be made by the administration of the agency after review is completed of each case, taking into consideration the circumstances that are cause for concern regarding the best interest of the child and/or family. Several issues will be considered, to include, but not limited to: severity of the incident, length of time that has passed since the incident happened, circumstances surrounding the incident, rehabilitation, and lifestyle changes.

In the event that the agency terminates a case, the client must agree to fully cooperate with the agency to ensure that any child referred to the prospective adoptive family is allowed the opportunity to be adopted by another prospective family.

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## AGENCY DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

The agency will fully disclose in writing to the general public the following upon request:\*

- agency adoption services
- general eligibility criteria
- fees
- foreign supervised providers and expected costs
- agency International Formal Application (service contract)

*\*This information is automatically provided to prospective clients making a request for the agency International Information Packet.*

In addition, the agency will make available the following to clients and prospective clients upon request:

- the number of annual adoptive placements
- the number of placements that remain intact, are disrupted, or dissolved
- the number of annual adoptive applicants
- the number of waiting children eligible for adoptive placement via the agency\*\*
- copies of country-specific adoption law

*\*\*While thousands of children may be available for international adoption, the agency can only account for those waiting children referred to our agency.*

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## PREGNANCY (DOMESTIC ADOPTION)

With the best interest of the family in mind, prospective adoptive couples who become pregnant during their adoption process will stop their adoption process at that time. Services for any portion of a home study/update, agency services, or post adoption supervision terminated prior to completion will be billed on a pro-rated basis. Payments for services not yet performed will be refunded, excepting the non-refundable fees. The timing of when the couple can pursue one of the agency's adoption programs should be discussed with the administration, always taking into consideration the Child Spacing policy; the clinical advisability of proceeding with adoption placement plans; the ages of the children involved; and the family's wishes.

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## PREGNANCY/BIRTH (INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION)

With the best interest of the family in mind, and in consideration of the foreign adoption process, the agency has implemented the following

pregnancy/birth policy. Prospective adoptive applicant(s) that become pregnant prior to the referral of a child will be required by the agency to terminate the adoption process, unless otherwise stated. The definition of "referral of a child" varies per international program and is defined in the country specific paragraphs below.

If a pregnancy/birth occurs after the referral of a child, as defined below, applicant(s) may have the option of continuing with their adoption or withdrawing from the program.

CHINA: The China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA) requires the youngest child in the home be at least three years old to be eligible to adopt from China. Therefore, if a pregnancy occurs prior to acceptance of a referral, the applicant(s) would be required to discontinue the adoption process. If a pregnancy occurs after acceptance of a referral, it is at the discretion of AAI Administration (see Child Spacing policy) and CCCWA as to whether the applicant(s) may proceed or must withdraw.

Due to the complexity of this issue, complicated by the uncertainty of the wait time for referral, the agency strongly recommends that if a family plans to have a child by birth, that the birth of the child not occur until after the adoptive placement.

If it is necessary for the family to discontinue the adoption process or if the family chooses to withdraw due to a pregnancy/birth, fees paid to the agency will be non-refundable. The applicant(s) may or may not be eligible to receive a refund of fees paid to other entities and the agency will not be held responsible for return of those monies.

If it is necessary for the family to discontinue the adoption process or if the family chooses to withdraw due to a pregnancy/birth, fees paid to the agency will be non-refundable. The applicants may or may not receive a refund of the international program fee paid to the contact in China, which is solely at the discretion of the China contact. The agency will not be held responsible for the return of these monies paid to the China contact.

OTHER PROGRAMS: If a pregnancy occurs prior to the acceptance of a referral, the applicant(s) would be required to discontinue the adoption process. Once a referral has been accepted, the applicant(s) would be allowed to proceed or withdraw, dependent on their wishes. If the applicant(s) must discontinue the adoptive process or chooses to withdraw, fees paid to the agency will be non-refundable. If a withdrawal occurs due to a pregnancy, the applicant(s) may or may not receive a refund of the international program fee paid to the foreign partner, which is solely at the discretion of the foreign partner. The agency will not be held responsible for the return of these monies paid to the foreign partner.

NOTE: The timing of when applicant(s) can again pursue one of the agency's adoption programs should be discussed with the administration, with the input of the program manager, always taking into consideration a.) the Child Spacing policy, b.) the clinical advisability of proceeding with adoption placement plans, c.) the policy of the foreign country, or their provider agency, d.) the ages of the children involved, and e.) the applicant(s) wishes.

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## **FEE AND REFUND POLICY**

### **DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL**

The agency has made a good faith effort to provide a comprehensive schedule of adoption fees. However, the agency cannot guarantee the final amount of a family's adoption fees and expenses. All fees, including agency, Convention country, and third party fees, are subject to change during the adoption process. Prospective adoptive parent(s) is/are required to pay the fees according to the fee schedule in effect when the fee is invoiced (if invoiced by AAI) or when the fee becomes due (for those fees which are not invoiced by AAI).

Fees are charged based on both direct and indirect services provided. All or a portion of a fee may be due prior to completion of a specific service. Any portion of a fee that is not paid prior to completion of a service will be due in full upon completion of that service. If payments are not received as scheduled, adoption services may be suspended until outstanding balances have been paid. Failure to pay outstanding balances for an extended period of time may result in the case being closed.

### **INTERNATIONAL ONLY**

The agency does not customarily charge additional fees and expenses beyond those disclosed in the fee schedules. In the event that unforeseen

additional fees or charges are incurred in the Convention country, the agency will charge such additional fees and expenses only under the following conditions:

1. Additional fees and expenses will be disclosed to prospective adoptive parent(s) in writing.
2. The agency will obtain consent from prospective adoptive parent(s) prior to expending additional funds in excess of \$1,000.
3. Written receipts will be provided to prospective adoptive parent(s) for any additional fees and expenses paid directly by the agency in the Convention country.

### **DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL**

In the event that either the agency or the Convention country is unable to complete your adoption process in the program for which you have applied or if the prospective adoptive parent(s) choose to withdraw from an adoption program, the following refund policy will apply:

1. All fees payable to AAI, except for International Program Fees, are nonrefundable once they are paid.
2. International Program Fees paid to the Convention country are not refundable by the agency. The agency will submit a refund request to the Convention country, however, the agency has no control over whether the funds will be refunded or not. The Convention country will make this determination, and their decision is final.
3. Fees paid directly to third parties in the U.S. or the Convention country are nonrefundable by the agency.

AAI Administration reserves the right to make exceptions to the refund policy in the event that such exceptions would benefit prospective adoptive parent(s). Refunds to which prospective adoptive parent(s) are entitled will be provided within sixty days of the completion of the delivery of services.