

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

U.S. Department of State • Bureau of Consular Affairs



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION DISPATCH

October 2021

Volume 8

The Office of Children’s Issues (CI) intends the Intercountry Adoption Dispatch to be a regular series of communications to keep adoption service providers (ASP) abreast of developments that may be relevant to your work in intercountry adoption. The information below is not intended to be comprehensive, but instead offers a snapshot of the issues we have focused on and information we believe may be useful to you as intercountry adoption professionals. Past issues of the Intercountry Adoption Dispatch are available on our website. We welcome your input and feedback, as well as suggestions for future versions. As always, we want to hear from you about specific questions or concerns as well. Please email ASPAdoption@state.gov.

Introducing CI Director Alison Dilworth

Alison Dilworth is the new Director of the Office of Children’s Issues at the U.S. Department of



State. She is from Illinois, and joined the U.S. Foreign Service in June 1997. She has served in Asuncion, Jerusalem, Cairo, Warsaw and, most recently, in Abu Dhabi as the Economic Counselor. She has held domestic positions in the Secretary of State’s Operations Center and the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in the Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Alison graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in the School of Foreign Service from Georgetown University and a JD from American University Washington College of Law. In 2013, she graduated from the National War College with a Master’s Degree in Strategic

Security Studies.

Alison is married to a Foreign Service Officer and has three very loud boys, ages twenty-one, eighteen and fourteen. She is an avid runner, has a soccer-watching problem, plays the clarinet and loves to read.

Introducing Branch Chief for the Pacific Division: John Fletcher

John Fletcher joined the Bilateral Adoptions Division in August 2021 as the Branch Chief for the Pacific Division. John Fletcher has served as an immigrant visa officer in Islamabad, and

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

U.S. Department of State • Bureau of Consular Affairs



Comings and Goings within the Office

In recent months, we have undergone several changes within our leadership and our office as a whole. Matthew Gillen, the Division Chief for the Bilateral Engagement Division retired from the Department. Around that same time, Scott Renner, transitioned into a new position with the Department. Also, a few of our country officers accepted new positions within the Department. We wish them all success in their new assignments. Our work continues, but there may be a delay in our response as we train new staff. We appreciate your patience as we work through all of the changes. We will introduce the new Division Chief in the coming months. For now, LaTina Marsh is the acting Division Chief.

Office of Children's Issues Role in the Department's Afghanistan Task Force

The Adoption Division operates under the larger umbrella of the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs Office of Overseas Citizens Services. The protection and welfare of U.S. citizens abroad remains our most vital and enduring mission. Department staff worked around the clock, and around the world, to aid in the ongoing relocation efforts of U.S. citizens seeking to leave Afghanistan. This effort has been a massive undertaking and an extraordinary feat of logistics and coordination under challenging circumstances. Our colleagues have provided consular services at the airport in Kabul, staffed call centers reaching out to U.S. citizens seeking to leave, communicated with Congress and the public, and operated a 24/7 task force in Washington. Other staff covered multiple portfolios to keep our important work on adoptions moving forward. Helping U.S. citizens during pivotal life moments is a sacred duty for us, and we would like to thank all of you for your patience and the heartfelt words of support many of you shared during this time.

National Adoption Month 2021

The Department is looking forward to the adoption community's recognition of National Adoption Month in November and the opportunity to listen, learn, and raise awareness about the vital role of intercountry adoption for children for whom permanent homes are not possible within their family of origin or country of birth. This year, the Department's programming will focus on sharing resources and information to raise awareness of our mission to support and safeguard the children and families involved in intercountry adoption. We are also eager to participate and attend a variety of National Adoption Month events within the community and, together, recognize the importance of this month throughout the year.



Status of AE Search: Adoptions is working on this as a high priority and will provide an update very soon. We will announce key developments via notices posted to our website and disseminated through the listserv as soon as we have information to share with ASPs and the public.

COUNTRY UPDATES

Afghanistan

- The Department of State occasionally receives inquiries from U.S. citizens concerned about the plight of children in Afghanistan and the possibility of adopting them. We share this concern for children in conflict areas and understand that some U.S. citizens want to respond by offering to open their homes and adopt these children in need. During times of crisis, it can also be exceptionally difficult to fulfill the legal requirements for adoption of both the United States and the child's country of origin. It can also be very difficult to gather documents necessary to fulfill the legal requirements of U.S. immigration law. Prospective adoptive parents may wish to consult with experienced immigration attorneys and to take extra caution when considering adopting or caring for a child under these circumstances.
- There are many ways in which U.S. citizens can help the children of Afghanistan, such as by making a contribution to an established non-governmental organization that is well placed to respond to Afghanistan's most urgent needs, including those related to the children of Afghanistan.

Honduras

- On September 17, 2021, Honduras completed their first intercountry adoption with the United States under the Convention of 29 May, 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption or Hague Adoption Convention. The children are an older sibling group (brother and sister), who were adopted by a U.S. citizen couple currently residing in Honduras. The Hague Adoption Convention entered into force in Honduras on June 1, 2019, the Office of Children's Issues along with Embassy Tegucigalpa have and continue to actively engaged with the Honduran Central Authority, the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family (DINAF), providing training and sharing best practices that will allow Honduras to successfully process and finalize future intercountry adoptions within the framework of the Hague Adoption Convention.

India

- The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) announced procedures under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA). CARA notified foreign central authorities that it has incorporated HAMA adoptions into its intercountry adoption procedures. The Office of Children's Issues is currently conducting an analysis of this information to confirm if the HAMA procedures published comport with U.S. Convention requirements. At this time, the status of HAMA adoptions as it relates to U.S. Conven-

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

U.S. Department of State • Bureau of Consular Affairs



The Netherlands

- In October, the Office of Children's Issues met in-person with representatives from the Dutch Central Authority (DCA) to discuss the recent suspension of intercountry adoptions to the Netherlands. The DCA explained they are conducting an analysis of countries of origin, including the United States, to examine weaknesses and vulnerabilities within various adoption systems. During their visit, the DCA met with representatives from IAAME, the Children's Bureau, AdoptUSKids, and the Center for Adoption Support and Education to learn about the U.S. child welfare system, the profile of children in foster care, and pre and post-adoption services provided to families. The outcome of the analysis will help the Dutch Parliament and Ministry of Security and Justice to determine whether intercountry adoptions will resume with the United States.

Niger

- On September 1, 2021, the *Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-Operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption* (Convention) entered into force for Niger. Please be advised that the Department of State has determined it will not be able to process intercountry adoptions from Niger initiated on or after September 1, 2021 (see below regarding "transition cases"). Niger does not yet have implementing legislation giving authority to the designated Central Authority to carry out its responsibilities under the Convention. As a result, consular officers will be unable to issue Hague Adoption Certificates or Custody Certificates, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) cannot approve [Form I-800, Petitions to Classify Convention Adoptees as an Immediate Relative](#), for a child from Niger.

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Upcoming Webinar: On Tuesday, October 26 at 8:00pm EST [United Suicide Survivors International](#) will host a webinar titled "Adoption and Suicide: Adult Adoptees Speak Out" with four adult adoptee panelists discussing this tough issue. Guests can register [here](#).

Revised Guides on Outgoing Adoptions: Please see updated information in the below guides regarding outgoing cases. The biggest change is in the sections on identifying outgoing Convention adoptions, and updates have also been made to the FAQs.

- [Guide to Processing Outgoing Cases](#)
- [Guide for State Authorities](#)

New Online Convention Flowchart: Adoptions has published a useful [flowchart](#) to our website at [adoption.state.gov](#). The chart sets out the steps and roles in the U.S. immigration process under the Adoption Convention. The flowchart may be useful in advising prospective adoptive parents about what to expect in the Convention process as well as with host country interlocutors.



CDC Updates to Medical Exam Including Covid-19 Vaccination Requirements: Effective October 1, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Technical Instructions for panel physicians will require all immigrant visa applicants, including adoptees, who are referred to the panel physicians to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as part of their medical exam prior to being issued a visa. The CDC requires the COVID-19 vaccine to be approved through either the World Health Organization (WHO) or the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). CDC's announcement can be found at [this link](#). Information regarding these changes were published on the Department of State [website](#) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) [website](#) as well. We understand adoption service providers and prospective adoptive parents would like to know how this applies to intercountry adoption cases. The Office of Children's Issues and USCIS will post adoption specific notices on their respective websites soon.

New Department of Health & Human Services Information on Military Adoption: Check out the new resources from Child Welfare Information Gateway: [Military Families Considering Adoption](#) and [Working With Families as They Pursue Adoption of Children and Youth](#).

Farewell from Children's Issues Director Scott Renner

To the Adoption Community,

Over the past three years, it has been an honor to get to know you all and gain an understanding of your work on behalf of children. Actually, it is more accurate to say I have come to understand your "passion" on behalf of children because it is clearly not just a job for anyone who works on adoptions, including the team at Children's Issues. No one is more deserving of our efforts than children who cannot help or protect themselves and you challenged me to carefully consider my part in the effort. I have deeply appreciated all of you who have reached out, gave me feedback and suggestions, and offered your ideas. You also demonstrated a willingness to be part of solutions and I thank you for that. We did not, and will not, always agree on the path forward. However, I do believe we agreed on the goal, that all children deserve a permanent home. I am confident that we as professionals can continue to work to ensure intercountry adoption is a real option for children, especially those for whom other opportunities for a permanent home like family reunification and domestic adoption do not exist. I also want to thank you for sharing with me your families' stories, photos and challenges and giving us a lens into how adoption impacted these children's lives in very real ways.

It is bitter sweet to leave the office, but I am thrilled to hand the reins of Children's Issues to Alison Dilworth. Under her leadership and with the strong support of Special Advisor Michelle Bernier Toth and the Adoptions Bilateral and Oversight teams, I am confident that positive initiatives will remain on track and I look forward to hearing of their continued progress. As many of you know, I am moving into a new position as Senior Advisor in Overseas Citizen Services and I will remain available to support Alison and the team in any way I can.

Thank you for everything you do,

Scott