

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

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



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION DISPATCH

VOLUME 10 - MAY 2022

The Ukraine Conflict's Impact on Vulnerable Children

Times of crises often highlight the Office of Children's Issues role, within the Bureau of Consular Affairs' Overseas Citizens Services, in supporting U.S. citizens in urgent need. Over the past year, our staff have worked on Consular Task Forces, responding to crises in China, Afghanistan, and Ethiopia, supporting citizens in their most vulnerable moments. Currently, several of our staff are supporting ASPs and PAPs whose adoptions have been affected by Russia's war on Ukraine. We know the call to serve is one that also resonates with ASPs who demonstrate commitment every day to supporting families and the best interests of children in day-to-day operations. The humanitarian crisis caused by the Kremlin's war on Ukraine and its impact on vulnerable Ukrainian children and families is of great concern to our team and the Department of State's leadership. Ukraine is one of the largest countries of origin for U.S. intercountry adoptions.

We have tremendous empathy for families who are connected and committed to Ukrainian children, including children they already know through hosting programs. We know that many families who host later become adoptive families and families often become emotionally attached to children long before a legal parent-child relationship is established. We know that the pause on adoption and hosting programs has added additional layers to the emotional complexity of this crisis.

We are grateful to the ASPs who are not only working with clients adopting in Ukraine but for all ASPs who continue to work in the intercountry adoption landscape and tackle complex challenges and issues. ASPs working in Ukraine have collaborated and communicated exceptionally well, which has helped the Department's efforts to communicate with the Ukrainian government and to support families whose adoptions have been impacted by this crisis. We appreciate the strong efforts supporting intercountry adoption being done inside and outside of Ukraine.

Since February, many of our staff committed much of their time to work with the Ukrainian government and other stakeholders to address challenges due to the Kremlin's war on Ukraine that affect children and families. Please visit our [website](#) for more information on the status of intercountry adoption and hosting programs in Ukraine, official Ukrainian Government statements, and other resources.

As always, keep up the important and good work and let us know how we can support and collaborate with you.

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 by contacting us at ASPAdoption@state.gov. Visit our website at <https://adoption.state.gov>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

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



ASP Call Trends

Throughout the past year, the Adoption Oversight Division Chief met individually with most accredited/approved ASPs, providing an opportunity for ASPs to ask candid questions, share concerns, provide feedback, and discuss ideas. In March 2022, she concluded the last calls with ASPs who indicated interest in participating in individual conversations. The Office of Children's Issues leadership and adoption staff are very appreciative of the frank and transparent conversations that ASPs were willing to have with the Department. Behind the scenes, our staff have discussed the various issues that ASPs raised in these conversations and frequently have used ASP insights to produce guidance and resources, collaborate with IAAME, and elevate issues in policymaking discussions that impact ASPs. Out of the more than 70 meetings held, the following issues were raised most often:

- Requests for more information regarding the new AE designation process;
- Interest in a separate, streamlined accreditation process for home study-only agencies;
- Requests for the Department to play a role in ASPs sharing best practices, coordinating, and collaborating;
- Challenges regarding Foreign Supervised Providers, case transfers, disruption/dissolutions, and relative adoptions;
- Request for status updates on adoption in China and what the Department is doing to advocate on the behalf of ASPs operating in China and PAPs with referrals of children in China;
- Questions on when the Department will next host an ICA symposium, and;
- Interest in increased substantive guidance on issues.

Status of Accrediting Entity Search

The Adoption Oversight Division is working on this as a high priority and will issue an Adoption Notice on this very soon. We will also host an ASP call to share information and answer questions.

Unregulated Custody Transfers

The Office of Children's Issues worked with the Uniform Law Commission (ULC) from 2018 to 2021 to provide subject matter expertise on how unregulated custody transfers (UCT) impact U.S. bilateral relations on intercountry adoption, why children adopted through the intercountry adoption process may be vulnerable to UCT, and the applicable federal regulations. The ULC finalized the [Unregulated Child Custody Transfer Act](#) in September 2021 and is encouraging state legislators to pass and implement the Act. As of April 2022, the Act has been enacted in Utah and Washington and introduced in Missouri.

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 by contacting us at ASPAdoption@state.gov. Visit our website at <https://adoption.state.gov>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE





European Adoption Consultants Guilty Pleas

On Friday, February 4 the Department of Justice released a [statement](#) about the guilty plea of former executive director of European Adoption Consultants, Margaret Cole. This follows earlier guilty pleas of EAC staff [Debra Parris](#) and [Robin Longoria](#). These indictments and guilty pleas are reminders of the importance of the U.S. accreditation/approval framework and the devastating consequences of unethical and illegal behavior for children, the families adopting them, and in some cases, the birth parents that did not consent for their children to be adopted. Overseeing the safety and integrity of intercountry adoption as the U.S. Central Authority for the Hague Adoption Convention is one of the Bureau of Consular Affairs' most important roles and a critical factor in maintaining productive bilateral relations on adoption around the world. We also want to thank all of you. We have incredible partners who share our The Office of Children's Issues is proud to share our commitment to protecting children and families.

COUNTRY UPDATES

Portugal: Authorization of Two ASPs

The Portuguese Central Authority has announced that they have authorized two ASPs to provide adoption services in Portugal. Having ASPs authorized to provide adoption services, even in countries with few intercountry adoptions, is essential to maintaining the integrity of the Hague Convention. This positive development represents how effective bilateral coordination by numerous stakeholders can support the viability of intercountry adoption and serve the best interests of children and families.

China: Continued Intercountry Adoption Suspension

The Office of Children's Issues and Mission China continue to seek updates from the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA) regarding the COVID-19 suspension of intercountry adoptions. We have repeated our request to resume intercountry adoptions for all children, particularly children with special needs and for cases where a child is nearing the aging-out date. CCCWA attributes the continued suspension to their concerns for the health and safety of children. We are committed to maintaining open lines of communication with ASPs, PAPs, advocacy organizations, and Congress, and are planning another stakeholder information sharing session soon.

Colombia: Updates to Post-Adoption Reporting Requirements

The Colombian Central Authority (Bienestar Familiar - ICBF) informed us that the requirements for post-adoption reporting have changed. Below are details of the new requirements and effective dates for implementation:

- ⇒ 29-MAR-2016 to 11-FEB-2021: 4 post-adoption reports, at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months after the adoption
- ⇒ 12-FEB-2021 to 11-AUG-2021: Transition period - Cases that were started under the old requirements were grandfathered into the old post adoption reporting requirements.
- ⇒ 12-AUG-2021 to Present: Children up to 7 yrs. 11 mos. (at time of adoption court order): 4 post-adoption reports at six-month intervals after adoption. Children 8 yrs. and above (at time of adoption court order): 6 post-adoption reports at six-month intervals after adoption.

The [country information page for Colombia](#) on adoption.state.gov will soon reflect the latest requirements.



INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

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



RESOURCES

ASP Testimonials on IAAME Webpage: IAAME published a new ASP [testimonials page](#) on their website that shares first-hand ASP experiences with the accreditation renewal process. ASPs are encouraged to share their renewal feedback with IAAME and will be asked for permission to share their account online.

Child Safeguarding: The U.S. Agency for International Development implementing partner Keeping Children Safe has developed free child safeguarding technical resources and support to organizations supporting refugees in Ukraine, including offering courses on child safeguarding topics. Resources are available in Ukrainian on [their website](#) and will soon be published in German, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, and Hungarian. Please feel free to share with contacts who are responsible for children's care.



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 by contacting us at ASPAdoption@state.gov. Visit our website at <https://adoption.state.gov>.

U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE