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Great Wall
china adoption
美國華爾領養中心

Home Study Outline for *ALL* Social Workers

Give your Social Worker a copy of this outline (this includes *Great Wall* social workers.)

The following is a guideline for your social worker to follow in writing your Home Study for China. These are guidelines required by the *China Center of Adoption Affairs* (CCAA) and the Hague Convention as set forth by The US Citizen and Immigration Service (USCIS). **It is imperative that your social worker incorporate these guidelines into your Home Study.**

Your home study preparer/social worker must hold a license or other authorization to conduct adoption home studies under the law of the jurisdiction in which the home study is conducted.

- If the home study is conducted in the U.S., the social worker must hold a license or authorization according to that state.
- For families living abroad, the preparer must hold any license or authorization required to conduct home studies under the law of that country. If the adoption service provider who prepares home studies abroad is also engaged in providing of any adoption services in the U.S. the ASP must also be authorized or licensed to do so in any State in which the adoption service provider practices.

The guidelines for the Home Study that is sent to USCIS are regulated by the state in which you live and/or Home Study Agency with which you work. Some states may require that the Home Study be sent to the Child Welfare Department of your state for approval before being sent to USCIS. Please ask your Home Study Agency for more information on your state's requirements. Texas residents please make sure to read the sections applicable to Texas Families only in the next sections and the "**Home Study Guidelines for Texas Social Workers Only**"

Before your home study can be finalized by your social worker, the draft of the home study must be emailed to Great Wall for approval. Please have your social worker email the draft of your home study to home.study@gwca.org.

Your Home Study must meet State, USCIS/Department of State, and CCAA regulations. Your home study must be less than 6 months old when it is submitted to USCIS along with your I800A application. The home study must be tailored to the particular situation of the applicant and to the specific Convention country in which the applicant intends to seek adoption of a child. According to Hague Convention and Department of State Standards, all applicants and adult household members have a duty of candor to disclose and must:

1. Give true and complete information to the home study preparer
2. Disclose any arrest, conviction or other adverse criminal history whether in the U.S. or abroad, even if the record of the arrest, conviction or other adverse criminal history has been expunged, sealed, pardoned, or the subject of any other amelioration.
3. Disclose other relevant information, such as physical mental or emotional health issues, or behavioral issues.
4. This duty of candor is ongoing and continues while the Form I800A is pending and after the Form I800A is approved and while any subsequent form I-800 is pending until there is a final decision admitting the Convention adoptee to the United States with a visa. The applicant and any additional adult member of the household must notify the home study preparer and USCIS of any new event of information that might warrant submission of an amended or updated home study.

You must have 3-4 signed and notarized copies of your home study.

- **One for USCIS/DOS:** Talk to your Home Study Agency to see if they send this copy to the CIS for you, or if you need to send it
- **One for your dossier:** to be sent to the CCAA
- **One for you to take to China:** We recommend that your Home Study Agency email your assigned Dossier Consultant a copy to proofread before you get it certified and authenticated.
- **One for your records**

CCAA requires four (4) face-to-face visits with the social worker/Home Study Agency. These may include but are not limited to the following: home visits, parent education classes (by the social worker or Home Study Agency), office visits to the Home Study Agency, etc.

I. MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS

- A. There will be four (4) face-to-face visits with the social worker/Home Study Agency. At least one visit must be in the home.
- B. The social worker must list the following: number of meetings; participants of the meetings (including other household members), dates of meetings; the place of the meeting; duration (or exact times) of meetings and topics discussed.
- C. **All face-to-face visits must not be older than one year** from the date the dossier is submitted to China. Please note that for USCIS the home study must be less than 6 months old prior to submitting with your I800A application.
- D. **For Texas families only:** The social worker must document the following interviews.
 - i. Individual interview with each parent.
 - ii. Joint interview with both parents.
 - iii. Group interview with all members of family.
 - iv. Individual interview with EACH member of the household three years of age or older, living in the home full or part time.
 - v. Individual interview with each other person living full or part time in the home.
 - vi. Document who was present at each interview and their relationship to adoptive applicants
- E. The social worker must identify additional adult members of the household by name, alien registration number (if applicable) and date of birth. (USCIS)
- F. The social worker must include an interview of any additional adult member of the household and an assessment of him or her. Please note that all requirements must be applied to any additional household member. Please include the information about the household member in each section of the home study and an assessment of that person regarding the content of that section.
- G. **For Texas families only:** The social worker must document every attempt to contact EACH child living outside the home. This applies to all children twelve years of age or older living outside the home for *any portion of the year*, including adult children.

II. MOTIVATION TO ADOPT

- A. Reason for the applicant's decision to adopt.
- B. Reason for the applicant's decision to adopt internationally from China.
- C. Any relevant information regarding applicant's preparation for adoption, especially if the family is interested in adopting a special needs child.
- D. An understanding of the possible risks and delays when adopting a child from China.
- E. An understanding and mental preparedness for the possibility of adaptability problems with the child after placement.
- F. An understanding of the impact of institutionalization on children.
- G. **For Texas families only:** The Home Study must specify whether or not the family has experienced fertility problems, and if so, how the family has resolved the feelings surrounding those issues.
- H. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on reasons for adoption.

III. FAMILY BACKGROUND, PERSONAL HISTORY AND IDENTIFICATION

- A. Summary of citizenship status, age, appearance, personality, interests, hobbies etc. of applicants.
- B. Summary of all members of existing household.
- C. Background information about applicants' family of origin and applicants' youth.
- D. Summary of relationship with parents, siblings, etc.
- E. Summary of education
 - 1. Level of education and other training.
 - 2. Educational achievements, certifications, etc.
- F. Employment History for each applicant
 - 1. Place of employment, occupation, title, annual salary, and length of time with employer.
 - 2. Brief employment history.
- G. Religious/Spiritual beliefs-Please clearly state that religious beliefs DO NOT PROHIBIT any medical treatment.
- H. **For Texas families only:** State all languages spoken by applicant
- I. **For Texas families only:** The social worker must state that s/he has verified the ages of both parents.
- J. Additional Adult Household member: provide all of the above information for any adult cohabitant. Social worker must also include an assessment of cohabitants' physical, mental and

emotional stability. Include results of medical exam and police clearance. Include an assessment of the cohabitants' feelings towards the adoption. Explain reason for cohabitation.

IV. MARITAL STATUS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

- A. Summary of marital experience and quality (and marriage certificate verification).
 - 1. Views about each other.
 - 2. Adoptive parents' attitudes toward marriage.
- B. Summary of family life and quality.
 - 1. Method of resolving issues within the marriage.
 - 2. Extent of satisfaction with the marriage.
- C. Summary of prior divorce(s) including the date, number, causes of the divorce(s) and verification of divorce decree(s).
- D. In any situation in which other adults live in the home the relationship of the housemate(s) and reason for the cohabitation should be clearly indicated.
 - 1. Cohabitants must also provide proof of medical exam and police clearance.
 - 2. Cohabitant's attitude toward the adoption
- E. **For Texas families only:** The social worker must state that s/he has verified the Marital Status of both parents.

V. CHILDREN STATUS

- A. Summary of all children of the applicant(s). **This includes all biological and adopted children living within or outside of the home.**
- B. Statement of the children's sex, age, interests, education, and place of residence
- C. Children 10 years and older, living in the home, shall clearly state their views on the parent(s) adopting a child from China.
- D. Documented attempts to contact each child 12 years and older living outside the home.

VI. HEALTH STATUS

- A. Summary of applicant's height, weight, and health status (verification of the physical exam form).

- B. Statements on whether the applicant(s) has/have suffered from any mental or psychological illness and whether these conditions will constitute unfavorable elements that affect the raising of a child.
- C. Address the current physical, mental and emotional health of the applicant or any additional adult member of the household, as well as any history of illness or of any mental, emotional, psychological or behavioral instability.
- D. Specify whether there were any referrals made for the physical, mental or emotional health of the applicant or household member and include a copy of the report resulting from each referral, and the assessment of the impact of the report on the suitability of the applicant to adopt and the recommended restrictions, if any, on the characteristics of the child to be placed in the home. If there were no concerns or referrals please state this fact.
- E. **The health status of the adoption applicants shall be identical with the physical exam form provided by the CCAA.**
- F. The Social worker will make an assessment of the applicant's suitability for parenting an adopted child.
- G. **For Texas families only:** Any disabilities of adoptive applicants evaluated in relation to their adjustment to the disability and any limits on their ability to care for a child.

VII. FINANCIAL STATUS (Includes any additional adult household member)

- A. Summary of applicant's income and expenses, including annual income, other income, family assets, financial resources, liabilities, living expenses etc.
- B. A statement concerning the evidence that was considered to verify the sources and amount of income and financial resources.
- C. Summary of balance between income and expenditure shall be described.
- D. Any income designated for the support of one or more children in the applicant's care and custody or any income designated for the support of another member of the household, must not be counted towards the financial resources available for the support of a prospective child.
- E. **Summary of the Financial Statement (as received from client), which must match the information in this Home Study report.**
- F. Health insurance of the applicants and adopted child.

- G. The social worker must make an assessment of the financial situation in relation to adopting a child.

VIII. CRIMINAL HISTORY AND ABUSE

- A. Verification of NO police record (from city police department), indicate date of clearance.
- B. If there is an arrest, include a certified copy of the documentation showing the final disposition of each incident which resulted in arrest, indictment, conviction and/or any other judicial or administrative action for anyone subject to the home study and a written statement submitted with the home study giving details, including any mitigating circumstances about each arrest, signed under penalty of perjury by the person to whom the arrest relates.
- C. Verification of NO child abuse (CANRIS or Central Registry—Person Search) record or other domestic violence record. Please see “c” for more details. **Home Study must indicate date of clearance.**
- D. A child abuse registry check **MUST** be completed for each adoptive parent and every person in the household over the age of 18 from ALL places of residence since the person’s 18th birthday. This includes all states and foreign residences. One of the following actions must be noted:
1. If the home study preparer has access to the child abuse registries these checks must be made and documented in the home study.
 2. If the state or foreign country requires the home study preparer to secure permission from the applicant and each adult member of the household before gaining access to information in such registries the home study preparer must secure such permission from those individuals and make appropriate checks.
 3. If the state or foreign country will only release information to an individual to whom the information relates then the applicant and additional adult member must secure such information and provide it to the home study preparer.
 4. If the state or foreign country will release information neither to the home study preparer nor to the person to whom the information relates or has not done so within 6 months of a written request for the information, this unavailability of information must be noted in the home study.

**Reference: Please go to the following links to inquire about requesting Child Abuse Registry Checks.

http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp/downloads/policy-issues/State_Child_Abuse_Registries.pdf

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Other_Child_care_Information/abuse_registry.asp

- E. Summary of any history of abuse or violence and criminal record (including *all* arrests (whether dismissed or dropped) and convictions. **Non-disclosure could significantly delay or prevent CIS approval to adopt.****
- F. The home study preparer must ask and report an answer to the questions for each applicant and adult household member whether he or she has a history as an offender of abuse, in the United States or Abroad, of the following: alcoholism, drug addiction, substance abuse, domestic/family violence, sexual abuse, and child abuse, even if such history did not result in an arrest or conviction. A statement if applicant was a victim of sexual abuse or neglect as a child. If no history, please state that fact. All of this must be written in a question and answer format. Ex. Social worker asked Mrs. Doe the following questions: Have you ever been an offender of abuse, in the United State or Abroad of domestic/family violence? Mrs. Doe responded NO
- G. Evaluations of any of the history listed above must provide the following
1. Dates of each arrest or conviction or history of substance abuse, sexual abuse, child abuse and/or family violence; or
 2. If not resulting in an arrest, the date or time period (if occurring over an extended period of time) of each occurrence and
 3. Details including any mitigating circumstances about each incident.
 4. Each statement must be signed, under penalty of perjury by the person to whom the incident relates.
- H. Statements about whether there was any punishment for any listed offense and whether the applicant has shown signs of correction.
- I. If an applicant or additional adult member of the household has history of substance abuse, sexual abuse or child abuse and /or family violence as an offender or any other criminal history, and the social worker wish to provide a favorable recommendation the applicant must have demonstrated appropriate rehabilitation. A favorable recommendation cannot be made based on a

claim of rehabilitation while an applicant or any adult member is on probation, parole, supervised release or other similar arrangement for conviction. Evidence of rehabilitation may include:

1. Evaluation of the seriousness of the arrests, conviction, history of abuse, number of incidents, length of time since the last incident, and offenders' acceptance of responsibility for his or her conduct and any type of counseling or rehabilitation programs which have been successfully completed.
 2. Written opinion from an appropriate licensed professional, such as a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or clinical social worker.
- J. **For Texas families only:** Statement that all person's 14 years of age and older have provided a criminal history and central registry background check for the state of Texas.
- K. The social worker shall make an assessment of the adoption applicant and whether or not she/they are eligible to adopt based on the information disclosed or obtained in any manner regarding abuse and criminal history of any applicant or household member.
- L. The social worker must evaluate the suitability of the home for adoptive placement in light of disclosure by adoptive parent or household member of a history of substance abuse.

IX. DESCRIPTION OF HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD

- A. Type of home, size, and appearance. Include a detailed description of the living accommodations where applicant currently resides. If the applicant is planning to move, the home study must include a description of the living accommodations where the child will reside if known. If the applicant is residing abroad at the time of the home study, the home study must include a description of the living accommodations where the child will reside in the United States if known. Each description must include an assessment of the suitability for a child and determination whether such space meets state requirements if any.
- B. **For Texas families only:** Social worker must obtain a sketch of the floor plan of the home showing dimensions and purposes of all the rooms in the home. Sketch must be attached to the home study.
- C. **For Texas Families only:** Social worker must obtain either a sketch or a photo of the outside areas showing areas of the grounds to be used by a child. This is used to determine any safety issues for the child. Sketch or photo must accompany the home study.

- D. Information about city and neighborhood and environment of the community.
- E. The type of educational, medical and public service utilities available in the area.
- F. The cultural diversity of the area and community's acceptance of children of other cultures and nationalities.
- G. Description of living area for the child and size of bedroom, also an assessment of the suitability for the child and whether the living space meets the requirements of the local government.
- H. **For Texas families only:** length of time spent at each residence for the past 10 years. You must specifically list the street address, city, and state of each residence.
- I. **For Texas families only:** statement that the home is clean, safe, free of obvious fire hazards, and is equipped with smoke detectors.
- J. **For Texas families only:** statement that all pets are vaccinated
- K. **For Texas families only:** if the adoptive home has a pool, wading pool, or other body of water, you must discuss safety issues and plans to ensure the safety of the child.

X. PARENTING PREPARATION

- A. Experience with children and/or training in childcare.
- B. Ways, means and ideas of parenting the adopted child, including plans for childcare.
- C. If the applicant(s) are planning to adopt a special needs or older child (over 3), the social worker must state the mental preparedness, willingness and ability of the applicant to provide proper care for such a child, their intention to adopt such a child and whether they are suitable to adopt such a child in light of their parenting plan. IF this information is not included in the home study an updated or amended home study will be necessary if the applicant seeks to adopt a special needs child.
- D. Attitudes toward discipline.
- E. Discuss the ways the applicants were disciplined as children and their reactions to the discipline they received.
- F. **For Texas families only:** Willingness to respect a child's religious affiliation and willingness to provide an opportunity for spiritual development if desired. This needs to be discussed for future development as well if the child is an infant. Will the adoptive parent's support questions and investigation of religions associated with birth country.

- G. **For Texas families only:** Discuss the adoptive applicants' sensitivity to and feelings about adopted children who may have been subjected to abuse and neglect. Discuss and assess the adoptive applicants' ability to help children who have been abused and neglected. If the applicants' experienced abuse or neglect as a child assess the handling of those experiences and the impact of those experiences on the applicants' ability to help children deal with their own experiences.
- H. **For Texas families only:** Discuss the adoptive applicants' sensitivity to, and feelings for children's experiences of separation from, and the loss of, their biological families. Discuss the applicants' personal experiences with separation and loss. Assess the applicants' acceptance of the process of grief and loss for children and assess their ability to help children through the grieving process.
- I. **For Texas families only:** Discuss the adoptive applicants' sensitivity to and feelings about, a child's biological family.
- J. **For Texas families only:** Discuss the adoptive applicants' expectations of the child and the flexibility of their expectations in relation to the child's actual needs and abilities. Discuss the applicants' ability to recognize and emphasize the strengths and achievements of the child.
- K. Documentation of counseling and/or training of the applicants regarding the Hague Convention training requirements if already provided or plans for future preparation and training regarding the issues topics required by the Hague Convention
- L. The social worker shall make an assessment of the applicant's suitability for parenting an adopted child.
- M. Include assessment of any potential problem areas, a copy of any outside evaluations, and recommended restrictions, if any, on the characteristics of the child to be placed in the home.
- N. Specify whether there were any referrals made and include a copy of the report resulting from each referral, and the assessment of the impact of the report on the suitability of the applicant to adopt and the recommended restrictions, if any, on the characteristics of the child to be placed in the home.
- O. Document plans for post-placement monitoring in the event the child will be adopted in the United States rather than abroad. This will pertain to families planning on one-parent travel.

If both parents are traveling, please indicate that the adoption will be finalized abroad and two post adoption reports will be submitted to the *China Center of Adoption Affairs* per the post adoption regulations.

XI. GUARDIANSHIP STATEMENT

- A. Statement designating the child's guardian should the applicants encounter an accident or premature death.
- B. The statement should include: name, age, profession, and marital status, status of children, health and income in \$USD.
- C. The social worker will make an assessment of guardians' suitability for parenting an adopted child.

XII. SUPPORT NETWORKS

- A. Expected involvement of family members and their support of the adoption.
- B. Friends and other support available.
- C. **For Texas families only:** The social worker must address and state the attitude of extended family regarding the adoption.

XIII. REFERENCES

- A. Three non-family references
- B. **For Texas families only:** Include names of references.
- C. Summary of their statements. Include direct quotes.

XIV. PREVIOUS HOME STUDY EVALUATIONS

- A. The social worker ask each applicant and other adult household member whether he or she previously has had a prior home study completed, or began a home study process in relation to an adoption or to any form of foster or other custodial care of a child that was not completed, whether or not the prior home study related to an inter-country adoption, and must include each individual's response to this question in the home study report. Must be in question-answer format.
- B. If yes, identify the agency involved in each prior or terminated home study, when the prior home study process began, the date the prior home study was completed and whether the prior home

study recommended for or against finding the applicant of additional adult member suitable for adoption, foster care or other custodial care of a child. If a prior home study was terminated without completion the current home study must indicate when the prior home study began, the date of termination and the reason for termination.

- C. The social worker will ask the applicant whether the applicant(s) or household member have been rejected or received an unfavorable Home Study and include the answer to this question. If yes, a copy of the any previous home study that did not favorably recommend the applicant or adult member must be attached to any home study submitted with the form I800A. If a copy of any prior home study that did not favorably recommend the applicant or additional adult member of the household is no longer available, the current home study must explain why the prior home study is no longer available. It must include the reasons for the rejection or unfavorable Home Study.
- D. An assessment by the social worker must evaluate the relevance of any prior unfavorable or uncompleted home study to the suitability of the applicant as the adoptive parent of a child.
- E. **For Texas families only:** Request and assess the following background information (if provided) from any child placing agency that previously conducted a foster screening, pre-adoptive home screening, post placement adoptive report, or home study:
- The screening, report, home study, and related documentation
 - Documentation of supervisory visits and evaluations
 - Any record of deficiencies and their resolutions and
 - The most current fire and health inspections

XV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social worker must assess the suitability of the applicant as the adoptive parent based on the applicant's background, family and medical history (including physical, mental and emotional health), social environment, reasons for adoption, ability to undertake an inter-country adoption and the characteristics of the child(ren) for whom they would be qualified to care.

- A. Formal recommendation **and** approval of the applicants as adoptive parents from the placing country. This must include the approval of the **number of children, age range, health status,**

gender and ethnicity. This must also include a discussion of the reasons for such approval. If the applicants are approved for a special needs child, this must be clearly stated.

- B. Desired **number of children, age range, health, gender, and ethnicity** of child.
- C. Specify whether there are any specific restrictions to the adoption based on the age, gender, or other characteristics of the child.
- D. Statement of authority to write a Home Study.
- E. Statement that the home study preparer certifies that he or she is authorized to complete home studies for Convention adoption cases. The certification must specify the State or country under whose authority the home study preparer is licensed or authorized, cite the specific law or regulation authorizing the preparer to conduct home studies and indicate the license number if any and the expiration date if any of this authorization or license.
- F. Certification must specify under 22 CFR part 96 (public domestic authority, accredited agency, temporary accredited agency, approved person, exempted provider or supervised provider) for his or her authorization to conduct convention adoption home studies.
- G. Statement of Non-Profit Status.
- H. Statement of previous international Home Study experience.
- I. Statement that the family is adopting the child through Great Wall China Adoption, a Hague accredited agency, and Great Wall China Adoption has reviewed and approved the home study.
- J. Statement that the Home Study preparer informed the applicant's of their duty to disclose all information and the consequences should they fail to disclose any information for questions that are asked.
- K. **Must include the following Hague required eligibility statements:**
 - a. The adoptive family meets all the requirements to adopt from China. Mrs. and Mrs. Smith, who are adopting a non-special-needs child, are between 30 and 50 years old at the time of application to the China Center of Adoption Affairs and have been married for more than two years. (If either or both are divorced, the present marriage must have lasted at least 5 years.) They are physically and mentally healthy, and neither has taken any psychotropic drugs in the past two years. Each has a Body Mass Index under 40. Their net assets are greater than \$80,000, and they have a minimum salary of \$10,000 per family member, including the child to be adopted. Both have earned high school high school diplomas. There are no more than

four children living in the home and all children are older than one year old. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Smith has a serious or recent criminal history.

- b. The home study preparer's signature must include a declaration, under penalty of perjury under U.S. law that:
 - i. The signer personally and with professional diligence reasonably necessary to protect the best interest of any child whom the applicant might adopt, either actually conducted or supervised the home study, including personal interviews, home visits and all other aspects of the investigation needed to prepare the home study and if the signer did not personally conduct the home study the person who actually did must be identified.
 - ii. The factual statements in the home study are true and correct to the best of the signer's knowledge, information and belief; and
 - iii. The home study preparer has advised the applicant of the duty of candor, specifically including the ongoing duty concerning disclosure of new events or information warranting submission of an updated or amended home study
 - iv. Certify that this home study is true and accurate and the same home study provided to the prospective adoptive parents or DHS, USCIS and placing country and that it meets all requirements for the state, federal and inter-country.
- c. Example: I, "social worker" verify under perjury of law of the United States of America that I have with professional diligence reasonably necessary to protect the best interest of any child whom the applicant might adopt have conducted this home study, including personal interviews, home visits and all other aspects of the investigation needed to prepare the home study. The content and statements within this home study are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I have notified the applicants and all household members of their duty to disclose and their continued duty to disclose any information or new events per the Hague Convention regulations. I certify that this is a true and accurate copy of the Home Study as provided to the Prospective Adoptive Parent or DHS, USCIS and China or Placing Country. I verify this Home Study meets all state, federal and inter-country requirements.

XVI. SIGNED BY THE SOCIAL WORKER AND NOTARIZED.

XVII. ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Home Study Agency's License
- B. Social Worker's License, if applicable (check with your Home Study Agency on this one as each state has different licensing requirements for the social workers)
- C. Home Study Adoption Agreement (see Appendix). This should be signed by the social worker or representative of the Home Study Agency. This form is not needed for Texas families.
- D. Non-profit Letter for the Home Study Agency, *only* if the non-profit status is not mentioned in the Home Study Report.
- E. **For Texas families only:** Sketch of the home and photos of outside area of the home.

If your social worker has any questions regarding the Home Study requirements, please have her/him contact your Dossier Consultant at *Great Wall*. Remember, **all Home Studies must be emailed to [home study@gwca.org](mailto:home.study@gwca.org) for review before they can be finalized.**