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 (HS) for China. These are guidelines required by the China Center for Children's Welfare and Adoption (CCCWA) 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.

Your home study must meet State, USCIS/Department of State (DOS), and CCCWA regulations. Your home study must be less than 6 months old (based on finalized, approved home study date) 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:
   - Disclose any arrest, conviction or other adverse criminal history whether in the U.S. or aboard, 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.
   - Disclose other relevant information, such as physical mental or emotional health issues, or behavioral issues.

   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.
Your social worker/ Home Study Agency should provide you with 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 CIS for you, or if you need to send it.

One for your dossier: to be sent to the CCCWA

One for you to take to China.

One for your records

CCCWA requires a minimum of 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.

Great Wall will not accept home study or any work from agencies that are denied Hague Accreditation. Therefore, families need to check the home study Hague Accreditation status. China now requires that the home study agency be COA or Hague Accredited. The homestudy must be prepared by certified social workers hired by the government or adoption agencies that are COA or Hague Accredited. The Hague Accreditation certificate must accompany the homestudy.

The family’s home study agency must sign an Exempt Provider Agreement (EPA) to work with Great Wall. This agreement does not need to be done for each individual family but for the HS Agency as a whole. If your HS agency has not completed this EPA previously, please inform your Dossier Consultant so we can send one over. Great Wall will NOT send your dossier to China without this signed EPA in our files.

Please note Great Wall requires verification of completion of the required specific Hague Parent Education topics prior to final approval of the homestudy. You must have the certificates of completion on file with Great Wall and documentation of this in the homestudy. GWCA does over online Hague training that meets all requirements. Please contact your GWCA consultant if you would like more information on this training curriculum.

Before your home study can be finalized by your social worker, the draft of the home study must be emailed to homestudy@gwca.org AND the Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAPs) (unless prohibited by your state law) to review/edit for factual information.

ALL revisions/re-drafts, MUST be reviewed by Great Wall until final approval is issued. Upon sending back the revisions, please bold, highlight, or otherwise note the corrections that have been made so as to quickly and easily locate the changes.

Texas Residents and Social Workers: Please make sure you read and follow the guidelines applicable to Texas Families only in each section as indicated in blue.
I. MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS

A. There will be at least four (4) face-to-face visits with the social worker/Home Study Agency. At least one visit must be in the home. Telephone or internet visits are not accepted in lieu of the face to face visits.

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 meetings; duration (or exact times) of meetings and topics discussed.

C. Please note that for USCIS the home study must be less than 6 months old (based on finalized, approved home study date) prior to submitting it with your I800A application. All face-to-face visits must not be older than one year from the date the dossier is submitted to China. If the home study visits become older than 1 year, a home study update will be required.

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 in the home with all members of family living in the home.
   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 any other persons 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 (age 17+) of the household and an assessment of him or her. NBC considers a nanny, housekeeper, employee, etc who works in the home full time (approximately 30+ hrs./week) to be a household member, even if this person does not reside in the home. Please consult the GWCA case manager should you have any questions/concerns about what constitutes an additional household member. Please note that ALL requirements must be applied to any additional adult household member (age 17+). 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 contact EACH child living outside the home and include information about these contacts within the home study. This applies to all children twelve years of age or older living outside the home for any portion of the year, including adult children. If they cannot get in contact they must document every attempt to contact.

II. MOTIVATION TO ADOPT

A. Reason for the applicants’ decision to adopt. (Why is the family adopting?)
B. Reason for the applicants’ decision to adopt internationally from China. (What lead them to select China?)
C. Any relevant information regarding applicant’s preparation for adoption, especially if the family is interested in adopting a special needs child. (i.e. reading books, attending workshops, consulting physicians, talking with other adoptive families, etc.)
D. An understanding and mental preparedness of: (feel free to use theses EXACT words as appropriate)
   i. The possible risks and delays when adopting a child from China.
   ii. The possibility of adaptability problems with the child after placement.
   iii. The impact of institutionalization on children.
E. 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.
F. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on reasons for adoption. (A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.)
III. FAMILY BACKGROUND, PERSONAL HISTORY AND IDENTIFICATION

A. For each adult member of the household, give a summary of:

**For Texas families only: Citizenship status** (applicant is a citizen of the US; has dual citizenship in the US and “xxx” country; is a citizen of “xxx” country and has a permanent resident alien card/green card; or a Naturalized citizen in the US originally from “xxx” country, etc)

- Age (list date and place of birth)
- Appearance (ex. Brown hair, green eyes, etc.)
- Personality (ex. Introverted, outspoken, friendly, organized, calm, etc.)
- Interests and hobbies (ex. biking, swimming, reading, scrap booking, shopping, etc.)

B. Make sure **ALL** members of existing household are identified and described.

C. Background information about applicants’ family of origin and applicants’ youth.

D. Summary of current relationship with parents, siblings, etc.

E. Summary of education:
   - Level of education and other training.
   - Educational achievements, certifications, etc.

F. Employment History for each applicant
   - For current employer: place of employment, field of work, title, annual salary, and length of time with employer.
   - Brief employment history. *(This can be basic, general information.)*

G. Religious/Spiritual beliefs-Please clearly state that religious beliefs DO NOT PROHIBIT any medical treatment.

**For Texas families only:**

H. State ALL languages spoken by each 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** (age 17+): provide all of the above information for any adult cohabitant (age 17+). Social worker must also include an assessment of cohabitants’ physical, mental and emotional stability. Include results of police and child abuse clearances. Include an assessment of the cohabitants’ feelings towards the adoption. Explain reason for cohabitation. **NBC considers a nanny, housekeeper, employee, etc who works in the home full time (approximately 30+ hrs./week) to be a household member, even if this person does not reside in the home.** Please consult the GWCA case manager should you have any questions/concerns about what constitutes an additional household member.

IV. MARITAL STATUS AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

A. Summary of marital experience and quality (and marriage certificate verification).
   - Views about each other. (ex. John sees Jane as “… “ Jane describes John as “… “)
   - Adoptive parents’ attitudes toward their marriage/ extent of satisfaction with the marriage.
   - Method of resolving issues/conflict within the marriage.

B. Summary of prior divorce(s), including the date, number, cause(s) of the divorce(s), verification of divorce decree(s). If this is the first marriage for each PAP, please state this fact.

C. **For Texas families only:** The social worker must state that s/he has verified the marriage certificate and divorce decrees (if applicable) of the applicants

D. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on the quality of the marriage. *(A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.)*

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 (if not living with prospective adoptive parents)

C. Children 10 years and older shall clearly state their views on the parents adopting a child from China.

D. Make sure the visit/interview/observation of child (ren) is noted in one of the four “meetings.”

E. Documented attempts to contact each child 12 years and older living outside the home.

F. **For Texas families only:** Notate the individual interview with EACH member of the household three years of age or older, living in the home full or part time.

G. **For Texas families only:** Please clearly state that the children living in the home are healthy and free of communicable diseases. **This MUST be verified by a letter from the child’s physician.**
VI. HEALTH STATUS (Families: please review for matching information with dossier documents)
A. The health status of the adoption applicants shall be identical with the physical exam form provided by the CCCWA. (i.e. height, weight, exam dates, test results, medications, must match exactly).
B. Summary of applicant’s height, weight, and health status (verification of the physical exam form)
C. Statement on whether the applicants have suffered from or have a history of any illness, or any mental, emotional, psychological or behavioral instability. The social worker must refer the applicant for psychological testing & evaluation if any of the following are applicable:
1) Has received or is receiving psychological counseling, training or therapy
2) Has potential emotional problems which could affect adoption, such as previous alcohol problems (must be sober for at least 10 yrs); mentally or physically abused; suffered emotional trauma or loss
3) Has other problems which the social worker considers necessary to conduct psychological evaluation. The psychological report must be included with the home study. State if these conditions will constitute unfavorable elements that affect the raising of a child.
D. Address the current physical, mental and emotional health of the applicant or any additional adult member of the household. (ex. “The current physical, mental and emotional health of John & Jane is excellent.”)
E. Specify whether the home study preparer made any referrals for the physical, mental or emotional health of the applicant or household member. 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. (ex. referrals for professional evaluation when the home study reveals prior psychiatric care or issues arising from sexual abuse, child abuse, or family violence, etc. if the home study preparer considers such referrals necessary or helpful for the proper completion of the home study.) If the Social Worker had no concerns or referrals for the applicants’ physical, mental or emotional health, please state this fact. (ex. “This social worker had no concerns and made no referrals for the physical, mental and emotional health of John and Jane.”)
F. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on the past and current health of the applicants. (A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.)
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): (Families: please review for matching information with dossier documents)
A. The financial information provided in this Home study Report must exactly match the Certificate of Financial Status, bank statements, and other supporting documents (as provided by the applicants).
B. YOU MUST INCLUDE A STATEMENT EXPLAINING THE EVIDENCE/SOURCE, ETC USED TO VERIFY THE SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF THE FINANCIAL INFORMATION (viewing the Certificate of Financial Status does not qualify as verifying the “evidence” of their financial status- Ex. Mortgage statement, employment letter, tax returns, checking statement, etc)
C. Summary of applicant’s financial status: (may not be limited to the items listed below)
   a. Annual income (list combined and separate) (as verified by: the employment letter, pay stub, tax return, etc)
   b. Other income (i.e. dividends, social security, annuity, trusts, etc.) (as verified by: tax statements, court document, CPA letter, etc.)
   c. Assets (i.e. personal property, value of real estate, stocks and bonds, savings and checking accounts, other investments, etc.) (as verified by: account statements, mortgage deed of trust, 401k statements, etc.)
   d. Liabilities (i.e. mortgage, car loans, student loans, credit cards, etc) (as verified by: mortgage statement, credit card statements, student loan documents, etc.) (Ex. John & Jane have mortgage of $250,000.00 with a monthly payment of $986.57, car loans totaling $15,385.00 with a monthly payment of $462.13, and credit card debt totaling $4,596.21 with a monthly payment of $34.51, as verified by Mortgage statement, car loan statements and credit card statements.)
   e. Living expenses- This is everything outside of the family’s monthly liability payments. ... Should not include their mortgage, student loans, credit cards, etc. You must state how much the monthly living expenses total, but you do NOT have to list the amounts of the monthly living expenses separately. However, you must make a statement explaining what the monthly expenses include. (Ex. “John & Jane have monthly living expenses totaling $1000.00 which includes groceries, utilities, clothing, dance classes, ...”)
D. Summary of balance between monthly income and monthly expenditures (monthly liability payments and
monthly living expenses combined) shall be described. (ex. “John & Jane have monthly income totaling $3500.00 and monthly expenses/liabilities totaling $1000.00. This leaves a balance of $2500.00 monthly which could be used for support of the adoptive child.”)

E. Any income designated for the support of one or more children in the applicant’s care and custody (child support) or any income designated for the support of another member of the household (disability income for adult member living with the family) must not be counted towards the financial resources available for the support of a prospective child.

F. For Texas families only: Health insurance of the applicants and indicate if adopted child will be covered- This is especially important for families preparing to adopt a child with special needs. The family should talk with their insurance company and make sure that the child will be covered upon placement with the family. (as verified by: insurance policy statement, etc.)

G. Life insurance of the applicants (not required) (as verified by: insurance policy statement)

H. If there is mention of a liability or expense for a second home (not an investment home), USCIS/NBC will require that a social worker visit that home, provide a full description of the home, address all state requirements, as well as make a statement of the suitability of the second home.

I. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on the current financial status of the applicants. (A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.)

VIII. CRIMINAL HISTORY AND ABUSE (Families: please review to ensure the results of a Child Abuse Clearance is included for EVERY ADULT MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD (age 17+) for EVERY state and foreign country lived in (regardless of length of time) since the age of 18)

A. Name ALL adult members of the household and list all states and foreign countries where ALL adult members of the household have lived since the age of 18, regardless of how long they lived there. (ex. “Since the age of 18, John has lived in Idaho, Nebraska, and Texas. Since the age of 18, Jane has lived in Italy, Switzerland, Florida, and Texas. There are no other adult members of the household.”)

B. A child abuse registry check MUST be completed for every adult member (age 17+) of the household for ALL places of residence since the person’s 18th birthday. This includes all states and foreign residences regardless of how long they resided there. Verification of NO child abuse record or other domestic violence record. Home study must indicate the results and the date of clearance.

C. Statement of verification of NO police record (from local police department or statewide clearance), RESULTS, indicate date of clearance.

* 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.

D. The home study preparer MUST ask and report an answer to (in question/answer format) the questions for each applicant and adult household member (age 17+) whether he or she has any arrest, conviction, or other adverse criminal history in the U.S. or abroad, even if the record has been expunged, sealed, pardoned, or the subject of any other amelioration. Non-disclosure could significantly delay or prevent CIS approval to adopt. (Ex. “John & Jane were each asked ‘Have you ever been arrested or convicted of a crime in the US or Abroad?’ They each responded ‘no’.”)

E. The home study preparer MUST ask and report an answer to (in question/answer format) the questions for each applicant and adult household member (age 17+) whether he or she has “a history as an offender, in the United States or Abroad, of the following: alcoholism, drug addiction, substance abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, or child abuse, even if such history did not result in an arrest or conviction.” Please feel free to cut and paste this exact statement as appropriate for the family. (Ex. “John & Jane were each asked ‘Do you have a history as an offender, in the United States or Abroad, of the following: alcoholism, drug addiction, substance abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, or child abuse, even if such history did not result in an arrest or conviction?’ They each responded ‘no.’”)

F. For Texas families only: A statement if applicant was a victim of sexual abuse or neglect as a child. A single incident of sexual abuse, child abuse, or family violence is sufficient to constitute a “history” of abuse and/or violence. If the applicant was a victim of this abuse, please discuss the way they have resolved the feelings related to this abuse. If no history, please state that fact.

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:
   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.
   Written opinion from an appropriate licensed professional, such as a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or clinical social worker.
J. The social worker shall make an assessment of the adoption applicant and whether or not she/he/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.
K. For Texas families only: Statement that all persons 14 years of age and older have provided a criminal history and central registry background check for the state of Texas.
L. For Texas families only: If any person in the household age 14+, prospective adoptive parent or additional household member has lived outside of the State of Texas in the last 5 years there must be documentation of Fingerprinting Clearances (fingerprinting must be completed for background check).
M. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on the criminal checks, criminal history, and child abuse clearances. (A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.)

IX. DESCRIPTION OF HOME AND NEIGHBORHOOD
A. Type of home (ex. duplex, single family, brick, ranch-style, etc.), size (square footage), and appearance (ex. Well kept, uncluttered, nice landscaping, etc). Include a detailed description of the living accommodations where applicant currently resides.
B. 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.
C. Each description MUST include an assessment of the family home and living space for the suitability of a child and determination whether such space meets state requirements (if any).
D. Description of proposed bedroom for the adoptive child including size, ventilation, closet, window, etc AND an assessment of the suitability for the child AND whether the bedroom living space meets the requirements of the local government.
E. Information about city, neighborhood/environment of the community. (Big city, farming community, small town, university town, industrial, etc.)
F. The type of educational, medical and public service utilities available in the area. (schools, hospitals, parks, recreation, libraries, etc.) For a family interested in the special needs program, it is important that detail is provided regarding medical resources in their area.
G. The cultural diversity of the area and community’s acceptance of children of other cultures and nationalities. (ex. John & Jane live in a very culturally diverse area with many families who have previously adopted from China and are always welcomed fully into the community.)
H. If you indicate that the family owns a second home (not an investment property), USCIS/NBC will require that a social worker visit that home, provide a full description of the home, address all state requirements, as well as make a statement of the suitability of the second home.
I. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on home and neighborhood described. (A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.)
J. **For Texas families only**: Social worker must obtain a sketch or blueprint of the floor plan of the home showing dimensions and purposes of all the rooms in the home. Review floor plan and sketches to determine whether there is sufficient space to accommodate the members of the household and the adoptive child and Any potential safety or health issues. Sketch/blueprint must be attached to the home study draft sent to GWCA staff for approval. **THE HS WILL NOT BE APPROVED WITHOUT THIS**

K. **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 or health issues for the child. Sketch or photo must accompany the home study draft sent to GWCA staff for approval. **THE HS WILL NOT BE APPROVED WITHOUT THIS**

L. **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, and zip code of each residence. You must also include the dates residing at each location.

M. **For Texas families only**: statement that the home is clean, safe, free of obvious fire hazards, and is equipped with smoke detectors. Texas licensing requires each of these be addressed. Feel free to cut and paste this statement if applicable for the family.

N. **For Texas families only**: statement that all pets are vaccinated.

O. **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. (ex. Baby-sitting, godparents, cares for children of family members/ friends, parenting classes, etc.)

B. Plans for childcare. (ex. Jane plans to stay at home with the new child. John & Jane plan to enroll their daughter in the same day care their other child attends. Etc.)

C. Ways, means and ideas of parenting the adopted child (ex. Parenting plan, parenting style, etc. including specific information for special needs child, if applicable)

D. 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.

E. Discipline style (ex. Removal of privileges, time-out, grounding, etc.)

F. Discuss the ways the applicants were disciplined as children and their reactions to the discipline they received. (ex. John was never disciplined as a child and feels like he was given too much freedom and knows that he will not implement this style with his child. Jane’s parents used time outs when she was a child and grounding as a teenager for discipline. She believes these were appropriate methods of dealing with disciplinary issues)

G. Verify the applicants’ completion of current Hague Convention training requirements (**at least 12 hours each of specific approved Hague topics outside of the home study process**). Provide copies of certificates for the completed training. This must be documented for final approval of the homestudy.

H. Include assessment of any potential problem areas, referrals to outside licensed professionals (physician, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, clinical social worker, or professional substance abuse counselor, etc) a copy of any outside evaluations, and recommendations/restrictions, if any, on the characteristics of the child to be placed in the home.

a. If any referrals were made, 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

b. **If none made, please state this.** (ex. “It is this home study preparer’s opinion that no further parenting counseling is needed at this time and I have made no such referrals.”)

I. Document plans for post adoption monitoring:

State that 6 post adoption reports will be submitted to the **China Center for Children’s Welfare and Adoption** per the post adoption regulation at the following intervals: 1 month, 6 months, 12 months, 2 years, 3 years and 5 years. If there are additional state requirements, please list.

J. The home study preparer must assess the suitability to adopt based on the applicants’ parenting preparation. (**A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.**)

K. **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 regardless of the age of the adoptive child. (Ex. John & Jane will support any questions and investigation by their adoptive child of any religion, even if that differs from their own belief system. They agree to provide the child with an opportunity for religious and spiritual development.)

L. 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. (ex. John & Jane are sensitive to the feelings of children who may have been abused or neglected. They fully respect that the child might need extra support, attention, love, patience, or possibly counseling. They are more than willing to seek out any outside help they may need.)

M. 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. (ex. John was very close to his grandfather who passed away a few years ago and the couple has dealt with infertility issues in the past. They learned about the full emotions of grief and loss through these situations and they hope to use their experience with loss/grief and disappointment to nurture their child through their feelings of the loss of her birth family. They have a great deal of empathy for their child’s loss.)

N. For Texas families only: Discuss the adoptive applicants’ sensitivity to and feelings about, a child’s biological family, their sensitivity to a child's feelings about his parents, their sensitivity to sibling relationships and their willingness to support ongoing family contact and relationships. (ex. The family is sensitive to their child’s sense of loss over their biological family. They understand that due to the nature of China adoption, contact with the birth family is highly unlikely. However, they would support their child if their child desired to make contact with her birth parents or birth siblings. They have respect, compassion and love for the birthmother for her choice to do what she felt was best for her child. John & Jane also plan to talk openly with their child about the choice that their mother made.)

O. 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. (ex. John & Jane have no preconceived expectations of their child and plan to love and nurture their child and raise them to be a happy and healthy adult. They realize that all children are different and have unique needs and abilities. They are willing to seek outside resources or interventions as needed.)

XI. GUARDIANSHIP STATEMENT
A. Statement designating the child’s guardian should the applicants encounter an accident or premature death. The CCCWA does not have any requirements regarding the selected guardian for the child, as long as the social worker finds the guardian to be a suitable selection.
B. The statement should include: name, age, profession, marital status, status of children, health and income in $USD.
C. The home study preparer must assess the suitability of the applicants’ choice of guardian for the child. (A summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.)

XII. SUPPORT NETWORKS
A. Expected involvement of family members and their support of the adoption.
B. Friends and other support systems available in the community. (ex. FCC group, church, etc.)
C. Ex. “John & Jane’s family and friends fully support and are thrilled about the adoption. In additional to extended family members’ support, planned involvement and affirmation of the applicants’ adoption plans, John & Jane indicate they have friends and neighbors with young children whom they can turn to for support.”
D. For Texas families only: The social worker must address and state the attitude of extended family regarding the adoption.

XIII. REFERENCES – The original signed & dated reference letters must be sent directly to your case manager at GWCA. They do not need to be notarized. Letters should state the relationship between the referrer and the applicant and length of time they have known the applicants. They should include information about the
applicants’ personality, merits, shortcomings, mental health, maturity, family atmosphere, stability, applicants’ behavior in the community and interpersonal relationships with others; address applicants’ ability to parent, suitability to adopt and any reasons not suitable.

**There must be at least 3 reference letters from:** good friends, neighbors, employers, colleagues, minister, family doctors, etc. If you have any adult children, one letter must come from the adult child. If you have minor children, one letter must come from a teacher, coach etc. of current minor children.

A. Three non-family references.
B. Summary of their statements. Include direct quotes. (Ex. “This social worker contacted three non-family references. They all describe John & Jane as loving parents to their other daughter. One reference says that “they are the happiest married people I have ever known.””)
C. For Texas families only: Include names of references. (ex. “Jill Smith says they are …”)

**XIV. PREVIOUS HOME STUDY EVALUATIONS**

A. The social worker must ask each applicant and other adult household member (age 17+) whether he or she:
   1. **Has a prior home study that was completed**
   2. **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)
   3. **Were rejected or received an unfavorable home study**
      Ex. “John & Jane answered ‘yes(no)’ when asked if they had ever had a home study in relation to an adoption, foster care or custodial care that was either completed, started and not completed, or completed with an unfavorable result?”

B. If YES that a family has been involved in a prior, favorable, or terminated home study, **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 or additional adult member suitable for adoption, foster care or other custodial care of a child.** If a prior home study was terminated with out completion the current home study must indicate when the prior home study began, the date of termination and the reason for termination. (ex. “John & Jane stated that they had a previous home study completed in 2005 by ‘XYZ Agency’. The favorable findings of that home study resulted in the placement and finalized adoption of Little Jane in January 2006.”)

C. If YES that the applicants had been rejected or received an unfavorable home study, a copy of the 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 these documents are 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. (A **summary statement of suitability is required for each section of the HS.**)

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: *(YOU MUST STATE THAT YOU ACQUIRED/ ATTEMPTED TO ACQUIRE THESE DOCUMENTS)*
   - 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

F. If YES that a family has had a previous home study completed **AND** this home study is an **UPDATE or ADDENDUM** to that home study, the following must be included:
   - A copy of the original home study being updated or amended, including all prior updates and amendments.
   - A statement from the preparer that he or she has reviewed the home study that is being updated or amended and is personally and fully aware of its contents

**XV. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS- Feel free to copy and paste as applicable to the family.**

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. This should be an overall statement of the suitability of the family to adopt a child considering all areas assessed within the home study.

A. Applicants’ desired/request for number of children, age range, health, gender, and ethnicity of child. **This should exactly match the application letter to the CCCWA in their dossier.** (Ex. John & Jane Doe are requesting a healthy female, 06-24 months, from China.)

   a. If the family is open to adopting a child with special needs, please use the phrasing “including but not limited to” to describe the special needs the family is open and willing to accept. This does not need to be an all inclusive list but it will certainly give an idea of the needs the family is considering. (Ex. “The family is open to adopting a child with special needs including but not limited to cleft lip/palate, club foot, developmental delays, cerebral palsy, spinal bifida, tethered spinal cord, hydrocephalus, and other special needs on a case by case basis.”)

B. Formal APPROVAL of the applicants as adoptive parents from the placing country (it is not sufficient for the Social Worker to state you recommend the family for adoption) This must include approval of the number of children, age range, health status, gender and ethnicity. (Ex. It is with great pleasure that I approve John & Jane Doe for the adoption of one healthy female, age 06-36 months, from China.)

   a. The age range that the SW approves for the applicants should encompass the family’s request and also be greater than the family’s desire. For example, if the family is requesting a child 00-36 months, we highly recommend that the SW approve the family for a child 00-48 months.

b. To approve a family for a child with special needs, please make a general special needs approval. (Ex. “This social worker approves the family for a healthy child or a child with special needs”)

C. Statement of authority to conduct a home study. 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. (Ex. “I, Social Worker, am authorized to complete home studies in XXX state under statute 123.456.789 (XXX State License # 123456789, non-expiring (or expires 1/1/2010)."

D. Certification under 22 CFR part 96 - State that the home study preparer and home study agency are COA / Hague Accredited to conduct convention adoption home studies. (Ex. “The home study preparer and XYZ agency are authorized to conduct Convention adoption home studies as a Hague Accredited Agency under 22 CFR Part 96.”)

E. Statement of previous international home study experience. (Ex. This social worker has 18 years of international home study experience.)

F. Statement that the family is adopting the child through Great Wall China Adoption, a Hague accredited agency under 22 CFR Part 96, and Great Wall China Adoption has reviewed and approved the home study. (Ex. “John & Jane Doe are adopting a child through Great Wall China Adoption, a Hague accredited agency under 22 CFR Part 96. Great Wall China Adoption has reviewed and approved this home study.”)

G. Statement that the home study preparer informed the applicants of their duty to disclose all information and the consequences they should fail to disclose any information for questions that are asked. This is different than the statement that the family understands their duty of candor regarding anything that may require an updated or amended home study.

H. Must include the following Hague required eligibility statements:

   a. “The adoptive family meets all the requirements to adopt from China. John & Jane Doe who are adopting a healthy or special-needs child, are between 30 and 50 years old at the time of application to the China Center for Children’s Welfare and Adoption 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 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.” **ALL PHRASES MUST BE INCLUDED!!**

I. The home study preparer’s signature must include a declaration, under penalty of perjury under U.S. law that: a. 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.

b. The factual statements in the home study are true and correct to the best of the signer’s knowledge, information and belief; and
c. 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
d. 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 penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States, 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 of candor, specifically including the ongoing duty to disclose any information or new events warranting submission of an updated or amended home study. I certify that this is a true and accurate copy of the Home study as provided to the Prospective Adoptive Parents 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. Accreditation Certificate from Hague or COA
B. Home Study Agency’s License
C. Social Worker’s License, if applicable (check with your Home Study Agency on this, as each state has different licensing requirements for the social workers)
D. Non-profit Letter for the Home Study Agency, only if the non-profit status is not mentioned in the Home Study Report.
E. 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.
F. ORIGINAL SIGNED/ DATED/NOTARIZED reference letters must be attached to the original signed home study which is certified and authenticated for the dossier. See section XIII for more information.
G. For Texas families only: Sketch/ floor-plan of the home with room purpose and dimensions and photos of outside area of the home.

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. ALL revisions/re-drafts, MUST be reviewed by Great Wall until final approval is issued. Upon sending back the revisions, please bold, highlight, or otherwise note the corrections that have been made so as to quickly and easily locate the changes.