

Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, 42 U.S.C. 14901–14954.

SOURCE: 71 FR 8131, Feb. 15, 2006, unless otherwise noted.

### Subpart A—General Provisions

#### § 96.1 Purpose.

This part provides for the accreditation and approval of agencies and persons pursuant to the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106–279, 42 U.S.C. 14901–14954). Subpart B of this part establishes the procedures for the selection and designation of accrediting entities to perform the accreditation and approval functions. Subparts C through H establish the general procedures and standards for accreditation and approval of agencies and persons (including renewal of accreditation or approval). Subparts I through M address the oversight of accredited or approved agencies and persons. Subpart N establishes special rules relating to small agencies that wish to seek temporary accreditation.

#### § 96.2 Definitions.

As used in this part, the term:

*Accredited agency* means an agency that has been accredited by an accrediting entity, in accordance with the standards in subpart F of this part, to provide adoption services in the United States in cases subject to the Convention. It does not include a temporarily accredited agency.

*Accrediting entity* means an entity that has been designated by the Secretary to accredit agencies (including temporarily accredit) and/or to approve persons for purposes of providing adoption services in the United States in cases subject to the Convention.

*Adoption* means the judicial or administrative act that establishes a permanent legal parent-child relationship between a minor and an adult who is not already the minor's legal parent and terminates the legal parent-child relationship between the adoptive child and any former parent(s).

*Adoption record* means any record, information, or item related to a specific Convention adoption of a child received or maintained by an agency, person, or public domestic authority, including, but not limited to, photographs, vid-

eos, correspondence, personal effects, medical and social information, and any other information about the child. An adoption record does not include a record generated by an agency, person, or a public domestic authority to comply with the requirement to file information with the Case Registry on adoptions not subject to the Convention pursuant to section 303(d) of the IAA (42 U.S.C. 14932(d)).

*Adoption service* means any one of the following six services:

- (1) Identifying a child for adoption and arranging an adoption;
- (2) Securing the necessary consent to termination of parental rights and to adoption;
- (3) Performing a background study on a child or a home study on a prospective adoptive parent(s), and reporting on such a study;
- (4) Making non-judicial determinations of the best interests of a child and the appropriateness of an adoptive placement for the child;
- (5) Monitoring a case after a child has been placed with prospective adoptive parent(s) until final adoption; or
- (6) When necessary because of a disruption before final adoption, assuming custody and providing (including facilitating the provision of) child care or any other social service pending an alternative placement.

*Agency* means a private, nonprofit organization licensed to provide adoption services in at least one State. (For-profit entities and individuals that provide adoption services are considered “persons” as defined in this section.)

*Approved home study* means a review of the home environment of the child's prospective adoptive parent(s) that has been:

- (1) Completed by an accredited agency or temporarily accredited agency; or
- (2) Approved by an accredited agency or temporarily accredited agency.

*Approved person* means a person that has been approved, in accordance with the standards in subpart F of this part, by an accrediting entity to provide adoption services in the United States in cases subject to the Convention.

*Best interests of the child* shall have the meaning given to it by the law of the State with jurisdiction to decide

whether a particular adoption or adoption-related action is in a child's best interests.

*Case Registry* means the tracking system jointly established by the Secretary and DHS to comply with section 102(e) of the IAA (42 U.S.C. 14912).

*Central Authority* means the entity designated as such under Article 6(1) of the Convention by any Convention country or, in the case of the United States, the United States Department of State.

*Central Authority function* means any duty required under the Convention to be carried out, directly or indirectly, by a Central Authority.

*Child welfare services* means services, other than those defined as "adoption services" in this section, that are designed to promote and protect the well-being of a family or child. Such services include, but are not limited to, recruiting and identifying adoptive parent(s) in cases of disruption (but not assuming custody of the child), arranging or providing temporary foster care for a child in connection with a Convention adoption or providing educational, social, cultural, medical, psychological assessment, mental health, or other health-related services for a child or family in a Convention adoption case.

*Competent authority* means a court or governmental authority of a foreign country that has jurisdiction and authority to make decisions in matters of child welfare, including adoption.

*Complaint Registry* means the system created by the Secretary pursuant to §96.70 to receive, distribute, and monitor complaints relevant to the accreditation or approval status of agencies and persons.

*Convention* means the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption done at The Hague on May 29, 1993.

*Convention adoption* means the adoption of a child resident in a Convention country by a United States citizen, or an adoption of a child resident in the United States by an individual or individuals residing in a Convention country, when, in connection with the adoption, the child has moved or will move between the United States and the Convention country.

*Convention country* means a country that is a party to the Convention and with which the Convention is in force for the United States.

*Country of origin* means the country in which a child is a resident and from which a child is emigrating in connection with his or her adoption.

*Debarment* means the loss of accreditation or approval by an agency or person as a result of an order of the Secretary under which the agency or person is temporarily or permanently barred from accreditation or approval.

*DHS* means the Department of Homeland Security and encompasses the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) or any successor entity designated by the Secretary of Homeland Security to assume the functions vested in the Attorney General by the IAA relating to the INS's responsibilities.

*Disruption* means the interruption of a placement for adoption during the post-placement period.

*Dissolution* means the termination of the adoptive parent(s)' parental rights after an adoption.

*Exempted provider* means a social work professional or organization that performs a home study on prospective adoptive parent(s) or a child background study (or both) in the United States in connection with a Convention adoption (including any reports or updates), but that is not currently providing and has not previously provided any other adoption service in the case.

*IAA* means the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, Public Law 106-279 (2000) (42 U.S.C. 14901-14954), as amended from time to time.

*Legal custody* means having legal responsibility for a child under the order of a court of law, a public domestic authority, competent authority, public foreign authority, or by operation of law.

*Legal services* means services, other than those defined in this section as "adoption services," that relate to the provision of legal advice and information and to the drafting of legal instruments. Such services include, but are not limited to, drawing up contracts, powers of attorney, and other legal instruments; providing advice and counsel to adoptive parent(s) on completing

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DHS or Central Authority forms; and providing advice and counsel to accredited agencies, temporarily accredited agencies, approved persons, or prospective adoptive parent(s) on how to comply with the Convention, the IAA, and the regulations implementing the IAA.

*Person* means an individual or a private, for-profit entity (including a corporation, company, association, firm, partnership, society, or joint stock company) providing adoption services. It does not include public domestic authorities or public foreign authorities.

*Post-adoption* means after an adoption; in cases in which an adoption occurs in a Convention country and is followed by a re-adoption in the United States, it means after the adoption in the Convention country.

*Post-placement* means after a grant of legal custody or guardianship of the child to the prospective adoptive parent(s), or to a custodian for the purpose of escorting the child to the identified prospective adoptive parent(s), and before an adoption.

*Primary provider* means the accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, or approved person that is identified pursuant to § 96.14 as responsible for ensuring that all six adoption services are provided and for supervising and being responsible for supervised providers where used.

*Public domestic authority* means an authority operated by a State, local, or tribal government within the United States.

*Public foreign authority* means an authority operated by a national or sub-national government of a Convention country.

*Secretary* means the Secretary of State, the Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, or any other Department of State official exercising the Secretary of State's authority under the Convention, the IAA, or any regulations implementing the IAA, pursuant to a delegation of authority.

*State* means the fifty States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*Supervised provider* means any agency, person, or other non-governmental entity, including any foreign entity,

regardless of whether it is called a facilitator, agent, attorney, or by any other name, that is providing one or more adoption services in a Convention case under the supervision and responsibility of an accredited agency, temporarily accredited agency, or approved person that is acting as the primary provider in the case.

*Temporarily accredited agency* means an agency that has been accredited on a temporary basis by an accrediting entity, in accordance with the standards in subpart N of this part, to provide adoption services in the United States in cases subject to the Convention. It does not include an accredited agency.

### § 96.3 [Reserved]

## Subpart B—Selection, Designation, and Duties of Accrediting Entities

### § 96.4 Designation of accrediting entities by the Secretary.

(a) The Secretary, in the Secretary's discretion, will designate one or more entities that meet the criteria set forth in § 96.5 to perform the accreditation (including temporary accreditation) and/or approval functions. Each accrediting entity's designation will be set forth in an agreement between the Secretary and the accrediting entity. The agreement will govern the accrediting entity's operations. The agreements will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(b) The Secretary's designation may authorize an accrediting entity to accredit (including temporarily accredit) agencies, to approve persons, or to both accredit agencies and approve persons. The designation may also limit the accrediting entity's geographic jurisdiction or impose other limits on the entity's jurisdiction.

(c) A public entity may only be designated to accredit agencies and approve persons that are located in the public entity's State.

### § 96.5 Requirement that accrediting entity be a nonprofit or public entity.

An accrediting entity must qualify as either:

(a) An organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue