



A Helping Hand  
ADOPTION AGENCY

# Adopting from Guatemala

## Program Facts

*Many adoptive parents choose to adopt from Guatemala because they are able to adopt young children who reside in foster care, as opposed to an orphanage. This program is currently the second most popular international adoption program in the United States, trailing only behind China in total number of adoptions to the United States in 2006. Guatemala is a beautiful land with a rich, though sometimes tragic, heritage; however poverty is rampant, and the effects of that poverty are most acutely seen in the lives of its children.*

- Boy and girl infants are available. Infants are in private foster care and not orphanages.
- Boy infants are usually available with little or no wait. There can be a 1 to 4 month wait for girl infants. Please contact our office for the most current referral wait times.
- Families are eligible for a referral after their home study has been approved by AHH.
- The time from referral until travel to get the baby is generally from eight to twelve months. Typically families complete their entire adoptions in about 1 year, though in some circumstances it could take longer. Please contact our office for the most current processing times. This timeframe reflects the fact that many families get referrals prior to dossier completion, yet the Guatemalan adoption process does not move forward until the family has submitted a completed dossier.
- One 4 day trip to Guatemala is required for the adoption. Families are also allowed to visit their child after the referral has been made and DNA testing has been confirmed.
- A Helping Hand's experienced and dedicated staff will assist you in the legal process.
- A Helping Hand staff can assist you in making travel arrangements.
- The implementation of The Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption may have some effect on Guatemalan adoptions, especially with respect to timing; therefore, our United States office will keep you fully informed on Guatemalan legislative developments.

## Eligibility Requirements

*When it comes to international adoption programs, Guatemala is less restrictive than most. However, carefully review the following standards as you consider the program, and please contact AHH directly if you have any questions about how the requirements of this program will impact your ability to adopt from Guatemala.*

- Both single women and married couples are eligible to adopt. Married couples must be married for at least 2 years.
- Adoptive parents must be at least 25 years old and under 55 years old to be eligible. This applies to both singles and couples. In certain cases, couples who are not yet 25 can start the process, but this is handled on a case-by-case basis.
- Each parent should not have more than 1 prior marriage, regardless of whether the previous marriage(s) ended in death or divorce. A couple should have no more than 2 prior marriages between the two of them.
- Adoptive parents must earn a minimum of \$25,000 a year and be above US Poverty Guidelines.
- Prospective adoptive parents should be in good physical and mental health. Applications where there is a significant physical or mental health illness can be approved on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature and severity of the condition.
- Applications where there has been an arrest can be approved on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature and severity of the offense.
- Applications where there has been drug or alcohol abuse can be approved on a case-by-case basis.

- Families can begin a second adoption from Guatemala at the time the first adopted child arrives home. A referral will be issued when the prior adoption has been completed for at least 1 year.

## Hague 101

*The Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoption will likely have some effect on Guatemalan adoptions when the United States government ratifies it in late 2007. Families considering this program should educate themselves on the implications of the Hague. This is intended to serve as a brief overview of this legislation.*

### **What is the Hague?**

The Hague Convention is a multilateral treaty intended to set internationally agreed upon norms and procedures for countries who participate in inter-country adoption. The goal of the Convention is to protect the children, birth parents, and adoptive parents involved in inter-country adoptions and to prevent child-trafficking and other abuses.

### **How does the Hague Convention affect the United States?**

The Hague treaty was drafted in 1994. The U.S. signed it in 1994. In 2000, President Clinton signed into law the Inter-Country Adoption Act of 2000, beginning the US implementation process for the Hague treaty. After 6 years of working out the details of the regulations, the US State Department has begun the final stages of implementation – the accrediting of US Adoption Agencies. When this step is complete, which will be in late 2007 according to the State Department's schedule, the United States will officially ratify the treaty.

### **What happens when the US ratifies the treaty?**

Once the U.S. is officially considered a Hague Country, then all adoption agencies working in other Hague Countries will have to be Hague Accredited or can act under an accredited agency as a supervised provider. Furthermore, all adoptions between "Hague Countries" will need to meet the terms of the treaty.

### **Is Guatemala considered a Hague Country?**

Yes. They signed the treaty, but they have not ratified it. Therefore, once the US deposits its instruments of ratification, adoptions from Guatemala may be halted unless the Guatemalan government has also ratified the convention.

### **What does that mean for us if we want to start an adoption from Guatemala now? Will we be able to finish?**

First and foremost, you should know that no adoption agency can ever guarantee a family that they will be able to complete an adoption. There are too many factors beyond an agency's control. However, in relation to the Hague, the US State Department has said that they will "grandfather" in any family who already has filed for US Immigration Approval (filed the I-600A) prior to the ratification. Since that is the first step in an adoption from Guatemala, at this time we do not feel that the Hague Convention creates an inordinate risk for families desiring to adopt from Guatemala.

### **Are there other risks we should consider before deciding to adopt from Guatemala?**

In March 2007, several events happened in Guatemala that made the adoption process more uncertain than it had been previously. In response to this, AHH temporarily imposed a moratorium on new applications into the program. We have reopened the program at this time due to the fact that we do not think the US or Guatemalan government is preparing to close the program; however our willingness to reopen the program to new applicants should not be interpreted to mean that we have a high degree of confidence that adoption processing will go smoothly. Families electing to begin the Guatemalan adoption process at this time should be prepared for a long, arduous journey and should be aware that there is some financial and emotional risk. If you want to discuss these matters further, please contact a member of our staff.

### **Answers to the above questions were adapted from the following on-line resources. Please take some time to explore these websites and further educate yourself on this topic.**

<http://www.jcics.org/Hague.htm>

<http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=1400>

[http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/notices/notices\\_2859.html](http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/notices/notices_2859.html)

[http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/intercountry/intercountry\\_3102.html](http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/intercountry/intercountry_3102.html)

[http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/convention/convention\\_3170.html](http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/convention/convention_3170.html)

[http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/intercountry/intercountry\\_3146.html](http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/intercountry/intercountry_3146.html)

## Fee Outline

*AHH has attempted to fully disclose all fees below. Other agencies may not do so. When comparing agency fees, please be sure that necessary fees in other fee schedules are not omitted. Be sure to compare "apples to apples."*

**A Helping Hand Adoption Agency Fee ..... \$5,250**

The Agency Fee is broken into the following 4 payments:

**Application Fee - \$250:** This payment is due before your application can be processed. It should be sent with your application or paid online the day you submit your application. We perform considerable work in the evaluation of applications; application fees are therefore non-refundable.

**Orientation Fee - \$1,000:** This payment is due at the time of your adoption orientation with your Family Advocate. It should be mailed to our office or paid online when your orientation is scheduled.

**Agency Fee at Dossier - \$1,600:** This payment is due two weeks before your dossier is turned into AHH. Your dossier cannot be sent to Guatemala until this payment has posted to your account; therefore it is best to pay it at least two weeks before sending your dossier to our office.

**Agency Fee at PGN Approval - \$2,400:** Due within 1 week of having received PGN Approval. It must be paid before any travel plans can be made.

**AHH Home Study Fee (KY Only)..... \$1,600**

If AHH is conducting your home study, half of this fee is due at the first home study visit and the balance is due at the last visit. This service is only provided to Kentucky residents. If you live in another state, you will need to pay a local agency directly to work with you on your home study, and their fee may vary significantly.

**United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) ..... \$830**

USCIS charges \$670 to process the I-600A, the petition to adopt internationally that you must file with USCIS. In addition to this fee, you will also pay \$80 per person to be fingerprinted. The total for couples is \$830; for singles it is \$750.

**County, State, and Consulate Authentication Fees.....\$350 - \$475 (estimate)**

Each of your dossier documents will need to be authenticated at the appropriate authorities in your state and at the Guatemalan Consulate or Embassy. Since each state charges a different amount for this service, we are providing an estimate for the costs of this step. Your Family Advocate will be able to advise you on the exact authentication costs for your dossier.

**AHH Post-Adoption Deposit ..... \$600**

A deposit in the amount of \$600 is due for post-adoption reports at the time of the **Agency Fee at Dossier**. Your deposit will be returned as follows: \$100 refund upon completion of 2-month post adoption; \$250 refund upon completion of 6-month post adoption; \$250 refund upon completion of 12-month post adoption. *Failure to complete post-adoption reports as scheduled will result in forfeiture of the deposit.*

**Foreign Fee ..... \$19,500**

The Foreign Fee covers a variety of expenses in Guatemala, including foster care and medical expenses for your child and the attorney's fees to complete your adoption. The Foreign Fee is broken into the following 4 payments:

**First Foreign Fee Payment - \$4,875:** This payment is due when you receive a referral. From the time that you receive the referral, you will have 5 working days to pay this fee.

**Second Foreign Fee Payment - \$4,875:** This payment is due at the time that DNA authorization is granted in Guatemala. This is usually around 2 months after receiving the referral.

**Third Foreign Fee Payment - \$4,875:** This payment is due after Pre-Approval and before your file goes into the PGN. This is anywhere from 4-6 months after receiving the referral.

**Fourth Foreign Fee Payment - \$4,875:** This payment is due at PGN approval, and must be received and forwarded to Guatemala before travel can occur. Travel Orientations cannot be scheduled until all fees are paid.

**DNA Testing..... \$515**

DNA Testing is required for all Guatemalan adoptions to ensure that the woman placing the baby for adoption is the baby's mother. The test is done by swabbing the mother's and child's mouths, and the test is sent to the United States for processing. The total lab cost for determining the result is \$470, and then the results must be authenticated which costs an additional \$45. You will pay this fee to AHH around the time that the test is taken.

**U.S. Visa for Your Child..... \$470**

The total cost for obtaining a U.S. Visa is \$470 and is broken down as follows. While you are in Guatemala, you will attend an appointment at the U.S. Embassy to pick up your child's visa. You will pay \$380 at this appointment for the Visa. Before you leave for Guatemala, you will pay AHH \$90 which is forwarded to Guatemala to cover the cost of the child's Visa Medical Exam. If you are adopting 2 unrelated children, the Embassy charges \$545 at the time of the appointment, in addition to the cost of the medical exams for each of the children.

**International Airfare ..... \$1,000 - \$1,800 (estimate)**

You will secure your own airline tickets. This estimate assumes two adults travel, with a return lap ticket for a child. Please keep in mind that airfare can fluctuate significantly due to season, demand, fuel, and other factors, and it is beyond our control.

**In-Country Travel Expenses.....\$600 - \$900**

These are the estimated costs for the majority of your in-country travel expenses. It is a budget for two people, and it covers your in-country hotels and meals. We recommend that families stay at either the Marriott or the Radisson in Guatemala City. The rates typically run \$75 to \$100 per night, but can vary due to season and demand. Breakfast is provided by the hotel, and you will pay for your lunch and dinner independently.

**TOTAL.....\$31,215 - \$32,440**

**Some Important Notes on the Fees:**

Some of the individual fees explained here are set, but others are variable depending upon the time of travel or your state of residence. We have given our best effort to provide an accurate range of costs that we believe will prove true for a high percentage of clients. **This is a reasonable guide based on past experiences; individual costs can fluctuate, and these figures do not constitute a contract.** Costs for obtaining birth certificates and passports are not included in this estimate and are payable directly to Vital Records or Passport Services Office. Furthermore, the cost for re-adoption is not included. Re-adoption is required for many families; for those for whom re-adoption is not required, it is still recommended. The cost depends on your state of residence.

## Discounts

*AHH works hard to keep our fees as low as possible for all families. We do, however, have a few discounts for which certain families qualify. If you have questions about whether or not you qualify for these discounts, please contact us directly.*

**Pastor’s Discount..... \$1,000**

AHH discounts our agency fee for pastors. This discount is deducted from the **Agency Fee at Referral**.

**Subsequent AHH Adoption Discount ..... \$250**

If you have adopted from AHH before, you will not need to pay an **Application Fee** for any subsequent adoptions. Simply write that you are a “Returning Family” on the application.

**Simultaneous Adoption Discount ..... \$250**

If you have adopted from AHH before, you will not need to pay an **Application Fee** for any subsequent adoptions. Simply write that you are a “Returning Family” on the application.

## Fee Schedule

*One of the most common questions we are asked is for an explanation of the fee schedule. We have done our best to clearly explain all of the fees above, and we hope the following fee schedule is helpful in your financial planning. We have not attached an exact timeline to this schedule, because each family’s adoption journey is different and it is very difficult to predict exact time-frames. However, this should serve as a general guide, and we’d be happy to answer any specific questions you may have.*

**Stage 1: Application to Dossier Completion**

For most families this stage takes approximately 3 to 6 months. The time-frame for this stage depends on several factors including the time that it takes for you to complete your home study and dossier, and the time that it takes for your USCIS office to process your I-600A. Most of these factors are beyond your control. In this stage, the following fees are due, typically in this order. Specifics for each of these fees are discussed in the Fee Outline section of this document.

- Application Fee**
- Orientation Fee**
- Home Study Fee**
- USCIS Application Fee**
- County, State, and Consulate Authentication Fees**

**Stage 2: Dossier Submission**

You will submit your dossier to Guatemala as soon as it is complete. The following fees are due before your dossier can be sent to Guatemala. We recommend that you pay these fees at least 1 week prior to your dossier being submitted to avoid any delay in shipping your dossier to Guatemala. Specifics for each of these fees are discussed in the Fee Outline section of this document.

- Agency Fee at Dossier**
- Post-Adoption Deposit**

**Stage 3: Referral to PGN**

These fees are due during the time that the Guatemalan government is processing your adoption. This time-frame can vary significantly from family to family, but in general the average is about 6 to 8 months. Please note that the **First Foreign Fee Payment** is due when you receive a referral; for some families, this occurs before their dossier is complete. Specifics for each of these fees are discussed in the Fee Outline section of this document.

**First Foreign Fee Payment**

**Second Foreign Fee Payment**

**DNA Testing**

**Third Foreign Fee Payment**

**Stage 4: PGN Approval to Travel**

Typically once you get PGN Approval, you will travel approximately 6 to 8 weeks later. In this stage, the following fees are due. Specifics for each of these fees are discussed in the Fee Outline section of this document. This does not include a budget for personal spending money while you are in Guatemala.

**Fourth Foreign Fee Payment**

**AHH Fee at PGN Approval**

**International Airfare**

**In-Country Travel Expenses**

**U.S. Visa for Your Child**

***If you have any questions, please contact A Helping Hand Adoption Agency.***

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