

The Status of International Adoptions from Russia

For Americans looking to adopt internationally, Russia has long been had a stable adoption program. Russia has typically been the third most popular sending country for international adoptions in the United States. Russian children who are given up for adoption typically are so because the poverty level in the country is such that raising a child would be difficult or impossible for the lower class parents. The result is that a large number of Russian children are made available for foreign adoption.

Recently, however, attempts at reform within the Russian adoption system have led to major delays in the adoption process. A recently passed Russian law requires adoption agencies to be re-accredited. The process of applying for and being granting accreditation and licensing has proven to be a slow one, resulting in the delays that are currently being seen.

Applications for accreditation must be reviewed by five Russian government ministries: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of these ministries sometimes requires clarification or additional information on certain applications, which leads to further delay. The website for the United States Embassy in Moscow cites one example in which the Ministry of Justice recently returned several applications to the agencies, asking for further information¹. The Ministry of Education can only sign off on the accreditation after receiving approval from each of the four other ministries. At the time of this writing (May 30, 2007) the Ministry of Education had not announced a date by which the review will be complete, and no adoption agencies had yet been accredited by the ministry.

These postponements in the adoption process have had some other consequences, as well. For example, prospective adoptive parents are having trouble traveling to Russia for their adoption visits. Russian adoptions require two such visits, the first being about a week and the second lasting two to three weeks. The Russian government issues visas to adopting parents for these visits, with specific parameters indicating the dates of the visit. However, because all adoptions are falling behind schedule, Americans are attempting to travel to Russia outside the dates specified on their visas. This can be especially problematic if they are able to travel to Russia, but wind up staying beyond the departure date of the visa. Significant delays in departing Russia can occur.

For the moment, adoptions in Russia are still mired in the bureaucratic accreditation process. The Russian government and the Ministry of Education are unable to say when the review might be over and adoptions will be back up to speed. For those wishing to adopt a Russian child, it is still possible to do

so, but one should be prepared to weather a significant waiting period. If enduring the process is not feasible, there are plenty of other countries with available children to consider. Some other viable options include China, South Korea, Guatemala, and many countries in Africa. News and updates on the Russian adoption process are available from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow website: http://moscow.usembassy.gov/consular/consular.php?record_id=adoptions