



WELCOME LETTER

Hello! My name is MaryBeth Rouse and I, along with other members of the COTW team, will be working with you over the next several months during this amazing journey. We are so excited that your family has made the decision to adopt from China. You will receive a lot of information and have many questions along the way, but we are all here to help you. Trust in our agency's 20+ years of experience.

We have determined that you meet the minimum criteria for China, received your application and payment of your application fee. Next you will be asked to sign a collection of initial disclosures along with your contract and schedules, before moving on to begin your adoption journey!

We will start with the home study process and adoption education. Our plan is to make sure you have all of the adoption education needed for this journey. The home study and education phase usually takes an average of three to four months, but it largely depends on the pace at which you complete your part of the required paperwork. There can be frustrating delays during the adoption journey, so it is important to do your part in a timely manner while you have control over your progress.

If you live in the state of Alabama, Children of the World will be completing your home study. If you are a *non-Alabama Resident* – Children of the World will provide you with names of Hague Accredited home study agencies in your state for you to select from that will guide you through having your home study completed.

The home study process can differ slightly by state. However, below is a list of typical requirements.

- State and FBI Criminal Clearances
- Child Abuse & Neglect Clearances for every state they have lived in since 18 years of age.
- Medical and Financial Reports
- Personal References
- Auto Biographies
- Certified Documents

Beyond the home study, we will move through additional key phases of your adoption process; immigration approval, dossier preparation and authentication, country registration, matching, etc. The key thing I want you to remember is that we are with you through every step. At each “new phase” you will be provided with detailed instructions/check-lists/samples/etc, along with the guidance and support of your adoption coordinator.

Most of your paperwork will be downloaded from our online portal system (SAM). SAM tasks are divided into phases. You will receive step-by-step instructions to complete each task. Some documents, we will need to have notarized originals, others can be completed and uploaded as a scan/PDF. The paperwork will seem daunting at times, but please try to

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keep your focus on the end goal. If you ever have a question on how any of the required items should be prepared, please ask your adoption coordinator. China is VERY particular about how they expect the dossier pieces to look. I've listed important reminders below.

Please read the following instructions before you begin. Keep this information in mind as you work your way through the paperwork:

1. Please complete and sign everything using your full legal name, as listed on your passport.
2. Please make sure your driver's license has your correct and current address.
3. You will be responsible for keeping up with the expiration dates on various documents including your passport, driver's license, USCIS fingerprints and approvals, background checks, etc.
4. If you have a foreign birth certificate, marriage license, etc., it will have to be translated to English by a certified translator. Please send the certified document, the translation, and the certificate of translation.
5. Please make sure each document is completed neatly. Everything will have to be translated once it is sent to China.
6. When a document has to be notarized, the date of the notary must match the date the document was signed.
7. Please make sure the notary does not expire within **two years**. We do not want any notarized documents to expire during this process. If they do, it could cause a delay.
8. Make an Adoption Binder! Keep your own records and make yourself a copy of every document you send in. Keep all of your documents, paperwork, instructions, and checklists in one location.

Please read the following information as you prepare to adopt from China:

1. Due to the time sensitive nature of some documents, you may have to complete items more than once. Often families will complete a document for their home study and have to another prepared for their dossier with more current info. Examples include: Medicals, Local Police Clearances, Employment Letters, and Financial Statement. Adoption requirements in foreign countries change frequently. Be prepared to redo documents or provide additional documents.
2. Avoid making any major changes in your life circumstances during your adoption process. Changes can cause additional costs and delays in your process. This includes changing jobs, moving to a new address, getting married or divorced, and changing the number of household members.
3. The youngest child in your household can be no younger than one year of age at the time the adoptive applicants are registered with CCCWA. If you become pregnant during the process, you will have to wait until the baby is born and turns one year of age before you can resume the adoption process.
4. If you have ANY prior arrests, you must provide a certified copy of the court disposition from the county of your arrest. This must be accompanied by a letter, signed under penalty of perjury, stating what happened and what you learned from the incident. This includes arrests when you were a juvenile, arrests for lacking the correct insurance or permit, and arrests for unpaid tickets or fines. This also applies to any person who has been issued a Restraining Order.



Together, we have a lot to accomplish in the coming months. So remember, this is a journey and not a sprint. Our favorite quote in the office is “God’s timing is perfect”, and it really is. Yes, this can be a stressful time, but it is also a wonderful, life-changing experience. Remember to enjoy the process along the way! We will be with you at every step of the process, from start to finish and long after. We truly believe you are part of our family and we love keeping in touch and getting updates long after you are home! If you have any questions, please reach out to us—we are here for you.

We pray favor on your process and blessings on your growing family!

