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SERIES

Legal Assistance Program

TOPIC:

ADOPTION IN JAPAN

July 2014

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Legal Assistance Office

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Legal Assistance Office
Phone: 226-4022

Office of the
Staff Judge Advocate
Misawa AB, Japan

ADOPTION IN JAPAN

This pamphlet seeks to address some of the most frequently asked questions about adoption in Japan. The contents were developed by the U.S. Department of State in order to acquaint you with the general requirements of Japanese adoptions. It is not a substitute for legal advice and counseling.

Specific questions regarding adoptions in Japan may be addressed to the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo or Consulate. The phone number to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo is (DSN) 224-5000 or commercial: Outside Japan (81)(3) 3224-5000; Inside Japan (03) 3224-5000. The phone number to the Consulate in Sapporo is: Inside Japan 011-641-1115; Outside Japan 81-11-641-1115. There are also several helpful websites, including, but not limited to, <http://japan.usembassy.gov> (Tokyo Embassy) and <http://adoption.state.gov> (state department). As with any overseas adoption, you will also want to contact the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo as soon as possible – even before a specific child has been identified - to ensure you know the rules with regard to visas and passports. Failure to follow proper procedures may result in the inability to travel back to the U.S. with your child.

You may also need a translator to assist you with the proceedings in Japan. The Misawa Air Base legal office has a referral list that provides the names and phone numbers of translators in the local area. **Disclaimer: Misawa Air Base Legal Office does not endorse or assume any responsibility for the professional ability and integrity of the individuals whose names appear on the list.**

Finally, the Air Force may consider the child that you are adopting as your dependent for military identification card purposes under AFI 36-3026 (I), *Identification Cards for Members of the Uniformed Services, Their Eligible Family Members, and other Eligible Personnel* even before the adoption is complete. You will be required to obtain documents from the placement agency and the child's birth certificate. Go to MPS for more information. In addition, to obtain medical care through a military medical treatment facility, you will have to request secretarial designee status for the child. Patient Administration at the hospital can advise you what documents are required for approval of that request under AFI 41-210, *Tricare Operations and Patient Administration Functions*. Finally, once the adoption is completed and the child is physically residing with the military sponsor stationed here in Japan, the child may obtain SOFA status. Do not forget to explore these issues fully with the appropriate offices.

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

JAPAN

DISCLAIMER: The following is intended as a very general guide to assist U.S. citizens who plan to adopt a child from a foreign country and apply for an immigrant visa for the child to come to the United States. Two sets of laws are particularly relevant: 1) the laws of the child's country of birth govern all activity in that country including the adoptability of individual children as well as the adoption of children in country in general; and 2) U.S. Federal immigration law governs the immigration of the child to the United States.

The information in this flyer relating to the legal requirements of specific foreign countries is based on public sources and our current understanding. It does not necessarily reflect the actual state of the laws of a child's country of birth and is provided for general information only. Moreover, U.S. immigration law, including regulations and interpretation, changes from time to time. This flyer reflects our current understanding of the law as of this date and is not legally authoritative. Questions involving foreign and U.S. immigration laws and legal interpretation should be addressed respectively to qualified foreign or U.S. legal counsel.

GENERAL: The following is a guide for U.S. citizens who are interested in adopting a child in Japan and applying for an immigrant visa for the child to come to the United States. U.S. consular officers give each petition careful consideration on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the legal requirements of both countries are met, for the protection of the prospective adoptive parent(s), the biological parents(s) and the child. Interested U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to contact U.S. consular officials in Japan before formalizing an adoption agreement to ensure that they have followed appropriate procedures which will make it possible for the Embassy to issue the child a U.S. immigrant visa.

PLEASE NOTE: There are two types of Japanese adoptions, known as "regular" and "special." Regular adoptions do not completely sever the ties between a child and his/her birth family, and therefore may not be sufficient basis for a U.S. immigrant visa. American prospective adoptive parents considering pursuing a "regular" adoption in Japan are strongly advised to consult with the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo before completing the Japanese adoption process.

AVAILABILITY OF JAPANESE CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION: Both Japanese and foreign children are available for adoption in Japan. Most of the orphans adopted in Japan by foreigners are Japanese. Among the cases of foreign children adopted by foreigners in Japan, many of the children are related to the adoptive U.S. parents and may have lived with the adoptive parents in Japan for more than two years.

JAPANESE ADOPTION AUTHORITIES: The Family Court and the Child Guidance Center (CGC) - often located in the City or Ward Office - are the government offices responsible for adoption in Japan. They have jurisdiction over the placement of children, home studies, and adoptions.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS: Japanese law allows two types of adoptions: special and regular. (Please see details in the "Japanese Adoption Procedures" section below.) In special adoptions, one of the adoptive parents must be over the age of 25 and the other must be at least 20 years old. Depending on the applicable U.S. State law, the Family Court may allow single parents to adopt on a case-by-case basis.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS: The Court will not consider adoption applications by prospective parents who are in Japan on temporary visitor visas. At least one prospective parent must show evidence of long-term residence in Japan. When the adoption is finalized, at least one adoptive parent must appear before the court. Japanese law does not permit proxy adoptions.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR POSSIBLY ADOPTABLE JAPANESE CHILDREN: Japanese law does not define "orphan." Rather, a "child who requires protection" is defined as:

- A child born out of wedlock;
- An abandoned infant;
- A child whose parent(s) has/have died or disappeared;
- A child whose parents are incapable of providing support; or
- An abused child.

The Child Guidance Center (CGC) is the local government authority responsible for determining whether a child requires protection. The CGC may issue a certificate to a "child who requires protection," but only if the child has been placed under the care of the child welfare authorities. The CGC will not issue a certificate if the child is to be adopted abroad or if the child will benefit from a privately arranged adoption.

Under Japanese law, an adoptable child is any minor who has been irrevocably released for adoption by his/her sole surviving parent, legal guardian, both parents (if both are living and remain married), the biological mother (in the case of an out-of-wedlock birth), or the institution that has custody of the child. If the child is not Japanese, the Family Court with jurisdiction over the adoption will consider an adoptable child to be any child who has met the pre-adoption requirements of the child's country of nationality. The surviving parent has the legal capacity to transfer custody of the child to a second party by signing a "statement of release of orphan for emigration and adoption." If the surviving biological parent is a minor, i.e., under 20 years old, then the biological parent's own parent or guardian must also sign a similar statement.

TIME FRAME: Adopting a child through the Family Court requires at least nine months, sometimes longer. The Family Court imposes no time limit on when an adoption must be completed.

JAPANESE ADOPTION FEES: Although costs can vary widely, the average total cost of adoption in Japan is approximately \$20,000. This includes fees for the Family Court, adoption agency, immigration processing, airfare, lodging, and document translations and authentications. Adoption agency fees range from \$2,000 to \$60,000, so the overall cost of the adoption often depends on which agency the parents choose. Parents may incur additional costs when adopting non-Japanese children or children with medical problems

ADOPTION AGENCIES AND ATTORNEYS: Neither adoption agencies nor attorneys are required to process an intercountry adoption in Japan. However, Japanese attorneys specializing in adoptions do exist, and the Japanese government does maintain a list of recommended adoption agencies. All adoption agencies in Japan are privately operated. American prospective adoptive parents who would like to contact adoption agencies in Japan can obtain a list of adoption agencies on the U.S. Embassy's website.

Prospective adoptive parents are advised to fully research any adoption agency or facilitator they plan to use for adoption services. For U.S.-based agencies, it is suggested that prospective adoptive parents contact the Better Business Bureau and/or the licensing office of the appropriate state government agency in the U.S. state where the agency is located or licensed.

JAPANESE ADOPTION PROCEDURES: Prospective adoptive parents may find children available for adoption either through the Child Guidance Center (CGC) or private parties such as missionaries, social welfare organizations or adoption agencies. It is important to remember that the CGC will only issue a certificate identifying a "child who requires protection" if the adoption is arranged through them. If the adoption is arranged privately, the adoptive parents must present the appropriate statement of release for emigration and adoption to prove the child is adoptable. However, even if the Japanese government certifies a child as requiring protection or considers a child legally adoptable, it is possible that the child may still not meet the U.S. immigration law definition of an orphan.

Once a child has been identified, the adoptive parents may apply to adopt the child through the local Family Court. When an adoption involves at least one foreign citizen - either parent or child - the Family Court applies the home country law of the foreign party. For U.S. citizen adoptive parents, the Court will consider the law governing intercountry adoptions in the parents' state of legal domicile. When the child is non-Japanese, the Family Court decides whether the case meets the pre-adoption requirements of the child's home country. If, for example, the home country adoption law requires a third party or home country government authority to approve or consent to the child's adoption, the Family Court requires this approval.

Two Types of Japanese Adoptions: "Regular" and "Special"

Regular adoptions: Regular adoptions occur with or without the court's consent if the minor child is a descendant of one of the adoptive parents. The City Office may register a regular adoption without the Family Court's consent. If the child is not a lineal descendant of the adoptive parents, the Family Court must adjudicate the adoption before the City Office will legally register the adoption decree. Unlike a special adoption, these adoptions in Japan do not fully sever ties between the adopted child and the biological parents. For example, Japanese inheritance law recognizes that a child adopted in a regular adoption may still have inheritance rights from the biological parents. In addition, regular adoptions can be easily dissolved. Thus, a regular adoption may not permanently create the distinctly new family relationship envisioned by most American adoptive parents. If the adopted child later obtains U.S. citizenship and abandons Japanese nationality, the legal effect on the child's ties to the biological parents under Japanese law is unclear. (Important Note: Under U.S. immigration law, such a child could not subsequently petition for his/her biological parents to immigrate to the United States.)

Special Adoptions: As in U.S. adoptions, this procedure severs the child's ties, rights, and privileges with regard to the birth parent(s) and any prior adoptive parent(s). In 1988, Japan introduced the special adoption to make Japanese adoptions more compatible with intercountry adoptions and to give more protection to adopted children under six years of age. Special adoptions appear to comply more fully with the provisions of Sections 101(b)(1)(E) and (F) of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) that *"no birth parent or prior adoptive parent of any such child thereafter, by virtue of such parentage, be accorded any right, privilege, or status."*

When the child and adoptive parents are not blood relatives, the adoptive parents must petition the Family Court with jurisdiction over the child's residence in Japan. After reviewing the documents, the Court informs the adoptive parents of the date of their court hearing. Typically, the Court will schedule the first hearing at the end of a trial six-month period. (Note: Although the six-month trial period normally begins when the parents file the adoption application, the Court will occasionally include any previous periods of cohabitation towards the six-month requirement.) During this trial period, the court-appointed investigator visits the family's home an average of three times, observing the interaction between the parents and the child. On the designated date, the child, the prospective parents, and the court-appointed investigator must attend a hearing in front of the judge. In most cases, the Court requires only one hearing, but the judge may call for additional hearings if necessary. Approximately two to three weeks after the final hearing, the judge will decide whether or not to approve the adoption. If the judge approves the petition, the Court issues a certificate allowing "Permission to adopt" (yoshi to suru koto o kyoka-suru). The adoptive parents must then register the adoption at the City or Ward Office. If the biological parents or any interested parties do not object within two weeks of the registration, the adoption is considered final.

Prospective parents filing for a special adoption should be aware of the following guidelines:

1. The child must be under the age of six at the time the adoption petition is filed OR under the age of eight and must have been placed under the continuous care and custody of the prospective adoptive parents since before the child's sixth birthday.
2. Two adoptive parents must jointly consent to the adoption. Single parents may only pursue a special adoption with the Family Court's consent.
3. One of the adoptive parents must be over 25 years of age and the other must be over 20 years old.
4. All persons with legal custody of the child, including the biological and adoptive parents, must consent to the adoption, EXCEPT IF:
 - a) The biological parents are incapable of declaring their intent;
 - b) Family Court rules that the biological parents have treated the child with "cruelty;"
 - c) The biological parents have abandoned the child; or
 - d) Any other cause "seriously harmful to the benefits of the person to be adopted" exists.
5. The child must be in the custody of, and residing with, the adoptive parents for at least six months before the Family Court will render a final judgment and issue an adoption decree.

Once the judge renders a decision, the Court waits two weeks to give the biological mother or interested third parties a chance to make any last plea. At the end of the two weeks, the Court considers the adoption final and issues the adoption decree (tokubetsu yoshito-suru). In a special adoption, the adoptive parents are not required to register the adoption at the city or ward office. As long as the special adoption remains intact, the child retains no inheritance rights with regard to the biological parents. Unless the Family Court rules to dissolve the special adoption, the adopted child and adoptive parent(s) cannot legally be separated. (See additional information about dissolution of special adoptions further on in this flyer.)

Japanese birth and adoption records: Civil records in Japan are reliable and maintained by the City or Ward office. The Japanese extract of the family register (koseki shohon) generally contains all current information that might otherwise be available in separate birth, adoption, marriage, divorce, or death records. In a special adoption, the koseki shohon only shows the name of the adoptive parents, as if they were the biological parents. In a regular adoption, both the biological and adoptive parents' names appear on the child's koseki shohon.

Non-Japanese children born in Japan: must have a consular report of birth issued by their country of nationality's embassy. A non-Japanese child born in Japan does not automatically acquire Japanese nationality. Occasionally, a non-Japanese child is stateless and therefore unable to obtain a consular report of birth. Stateless children may apply for a "certificate of acceptance of notification of birth" (shussei todoke juri shomeisho) at the City or Ward office with jurisdiction over where the child is born. The municipal office only maintains this type of record for ten years.

Evidence of a full and final Japanese adoption may take one of two basic forms. In regular adoptions where the Family Court gives permission to adopt, the certificate of "permission to adopt" together with the child's family register showing the adoption, serves as proof of legal adoption. In special adoptions where the Family Court grants the adoption, the final adoption decree issued by the Court serves as proof of legal adoption.

Registering the Adoption: When one or both of the adoptive parents is Japanese, that parent must enter the adoption on his/her family register. This record also serves as proof of a valid adoption. The final court decree and the family register should ultimately reflect both the child's biological and adoptive identities. In order for the child to qualify for U.S. immigration benefits, the Family Court adoption decree and the family register showing the adoption must include the name of at least one U.S. citizen adoptive parent who petitions for the child.

In the case of a regular adoption, adoptive parents may need to register the adoption with the municipal office in order to complete the adoption. If registration is required, the adoptive parents must submit their marriage certificate, birth certificates (for themselves and the adopted child), passports, alien registration cards, the Family Court's final adoption decree or certificate of "permission to adopt," and a completed registration application to the City or Ward Office. The biological parents (or the child's pre-adoption legal guardian) and two adult witnesses must also sign the registration application. Registration is usually final soon after applying.

JAPANESE DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS: Prospective parents must assemble and present several documents, notarized, certified, or authenticated as appropriate, to the Family Court, including:

- Birth certificate and/or family register of all parties;
- Copy of passport, Japanese visa, and Alien Registration card;
- Copy of U.S. military ID (where applicable);
- Marriage, divorce, and death certificates (where applicable);
- Medical examination certificates;
- Certificate of foster parent registration (where applicable);
- Certificate of good conduct/no criminal record for each adoptive parent, issued by their home city or state police department;
- Certificate of legal address, employment, and income;
- Copy of any property ownership deeds and/or bank statements;
- Biographic history of all parties;
- Statement of consent to adopt by the child's biological parent(s) or guardian;
- Statement of prospective parent(s) intent to adopt the identified child;
- Pictures of all parties, preferably of parent(s) with the child;
- Home Study approved by an authorized and licensed adoption agency;
- Two character references.

*Note: This list is not definitive. The Family Court may require additional documents when it sees fit.

Japanese translations are required: The Family Court or City Office will require certified Japanese translations of all documents. The translator must execute a statement before a notary public attesting to the validity of the translation. The notary's seal must be authenticated, as well.

AUTHENTICATING U.S. DOCUMENTS TO BE USED ABROAD: The language describing the process of authenticating U.S. documents to be used abroad is currently under review. Please click on the following link for more information until the new language is finalized:

<http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth/>.

OBTAINING A PASSPORT FOR AN ADOPTED CHILD: Before proceeding with U.S. immigration procedures (see below), American citizens who have adopted a foreign child must obtain a passport for that child. An adopted foreign child is **not** a U.S. citizen from the moment of adoption, and thus cannot immediately get a U.S. passport.

If the child is a Japanese citizen, adoptive parents must obtain a Japanese passport for the child from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Only the child's biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian may apply for a passport on behalf of the minor child. Japanese passports issued to minors are normally valid for five years from the date of issue and may be renewed at a Japanese embassy or consulate abroad.

If the child is not a Japanese citizen, the child will need to apply for a passport from his/her home country's embassy. If the adopted child is stateless or from a country that does not share diplomatic relations with Japan, the child may apply for a re-entry permit from Japan's Ministry of Justice. The Japanese government does not control the international movement of children who hold Japanese citizenship or legal residency.

U.S. IMMIGRATION REQUIREMENTS:

I. The Petition: Adoptive and prospective adoptive parents must obtain approval of a *Petition to Classify Orphan as an Immediate Relative (Form I-600)* from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in the Department of Homeland Security (USCIS) before they can apply for an immigrant visa on behalf of a Japanese adopted child. The adjudication of such petitions can be very time-consuming and parents are encouraged to begin the process well in advance. In order to expedite the processing of the I-600 petition, prospective adoptive parents may choose to file Form I-600A, *Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition*, with the USCIS office having jurisdiction over their place of residence. This form allows the most time-consuming part of the process to be completed in advance, even before the parent has located a child to adopt. In addition, a parent who has an approved I-600A may file an I-600 in person at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo.

Detailed information about filing these forms can be found on the USCIS web site at <http://www.uscis.gov/>. Americans who have adopted or hope to adopt a child from Japan should request, at the time they file these forms, that USCIS notify the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo as soon as the form is approved. Upon receipt of such notification, the Embassy will contact the parents and provide additional instructions on the immigration process. U.S. consular officers may not begin processing an orphan adoption case until they have received formal notification of approval from a USCIS office in the United States.

II. The Orphan Investigation: One part of the petition process that the USCIS cannot complete in advance is the "orphan investigation." An orphan investigation Form I-604, Report on Overseas Orphan Investigation, is required in all orphan adoption cases, even if an I-600 has already been approved, and serves to verify that the child is an orphan as defined by U.S. immigration law. This investigation is performed by a consular officer at the time of the child's immigrant visa interview. In a small percentage of cases, a more in-depth investigation may be required.

Immigrant visa application process: Once the U.S. Embassy receives notification from USCIS that an adoptive parent's (I-600A) Application for Advance Processing of Orphan Petition has been approved, the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo will forward an approval notification which includes instructions on the next steps in the process.

After the adoption is legally final, applicants in the U.S. must file an I-600 petition with USCIS. Applicants who reside in Japan must file the I-600 petition at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Petitioners are required to schedule an appointment to file Form I-600 on Wednesday mornings (except American and Japanese holidays) between 08:30 and 11:00 AM. Applicants must request an appointment by fax at 81-3-3224-5929.

Note: Visa issuance after the final interview now generally takes 24 hours and it will not normally be possible to provide the visa to adoptive parents on the day of the interview.

ACQUIRING U.S. CITIZENSHIP: The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 was designed to make acquisition of U.S. citizenship easier and to eliminate extra steps and costs. Under the Child Citizenship Act, children adopted abroad automatically acquire U.S. citizenship if: At least one of the child's parents is a U.S. citizen; The child is under 18; The child lives in the legal and physical custody of the American citizen parent; The child is admitted into the United States as an immigrant for lawful permanent residence; and The adoption is final.

Because of the Child Citizenship Act, many parents no longer need to apply separately for a child's naturalization. If your adoption does not meet these requirements, you must take additional steps to secure your child's U.S. citizenship.

DISSOLVING A JAPANESE ADOPTION: For regular adoptions anyone fifteen years old and above can apply to dissolve a regular adoption. If the adopted child and the adoptive parents agree to dissolve the adoption, they must file a request for dissolution at the City or Ward office. The Family Court does not get involved. If an adopted child is under the age of fifteen, the child's legal representative must file the request. If the parties cannot agree to dissolve a regular adoption, the Family Court may consider the dissolution. In this case, the biological parent(s) or anyone with legal responsibility over the child may apply for the dissolution. The Family Court is likely to dissolve a regular adoption if it finds that one of the parties has maliciously deserted the others, the whereabouts of the adopted child or adoptive parents has been unknown for three years, or there are "grave reasons" for dissolving the adoption.

Most dissolutions are by mutual consent and involve adult adopters. Over 90 percent of adoptions in Japan involve non-minors, stepchildren, or prominent son-less families who adopt sons-in-law to pass on the family name. When a regular adoption is dissolved, the formerly adopted child reacquires the legal obligation to care for the biological parents.

For special adoptions an adopted child, the biological parents, or a prosecutor may apply to the Family Court to dissolve a special adoption. According to the Civil Code, the Family Court may only dissolve a special adoption under the following circumstances: (1) "the fact that there is cruel treatment or malicious desertion by an adopter, or other cause seriously harmful to the benefits of an adopted child; and (2) the fact that the birth parents can take proper care and custody." If a special adoption is dissolved, the child will acquire the same civil status and rights held prior to the adoption.

JAPANESE EMBASSY AND CONSULATES IN THE UNITED STATES:

Embassy of Japan
2520 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20008-2869
Tel: (202) 939-6700

Japan also has Consulates in Anchorage, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Honolulu, Houston, Miami, Kansas City (MO), Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Portland (OR), Saipan (Mariana Islands), San Francisco, Seattle and Tamuning (Guam).

U.S. EMBASSY AND CONSULATES IN JAPAN: Americans living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration website, <https://travelregistration.state.gov/>, and to obtain updated information on travel and security within the country of travel. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The Consular Section is located at:

U.S. Embassy Tokyo
Box 205
1-10-5 Akasaka Minato-ku
Tokyo 107-8420, Japan
Tel: (81)(3) 3224-5000
Fax: (81)(3) 3224-5929

Immigrant and Nonimmigrant Visas
Unit 45004, Box 205
APO AP 96337-5004

The United States also has Consulates in Naha, Osaka-Kobe, Sapporo, Fukuoka, and Nagoya.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Specific questions about adoption in Japan may be addressed to U.S. Embassy Tokyo at the numbers listed in this flyer. General questions regarding intercountry adoption may be addressed to the Office of Children's Issues, U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/CI, SA-29, 4th Floor, 2201 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818, toll-free Tel: 1-888-407-4747.

Useful information is also available from several other sources:

Telephone:

- **Toll Free** - For information on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction, call Overseas Citizens Services at 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.
- **U.S. Department of State Visa Office** - recorded information concerning immigrant visas for adopting children, (202) 663-1225.
- **U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services** - recorded information for requesting immigrant visa application forms, 1-800-870-FORM (3676).

Internet :

- **Adoption Information Flyers:** The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs Web site at: <http://travel.state.gov/> contains intercountry adoption information flyers like this one and the International Adoptions brochure.
- **Consular Information Sheets:** The State Department has general information about hiring a foreign attorney and authenticating documents that may supplement the country-specific information provided in this flier. In addition, the State Department publishes Consular Information Sheets (CIS) for every country in the world, providing information such as location of the U.S. Embassy, health conditions, political situations, and crime reports. If the situation in a country poses a specific threat to the safety and security of American citizens that is not addressed in the CIS for that country, the State Department may issue a Public Announcement alerting U.S. citizens to local security situations. If conditions in a country are sufficiently serious, the State Department may issue a Travel Warning recommending that U.S. citizens avoid traveling to that country. These documents are available on the Internet at: <http://travel.state.gov/> or by calling the State Department's Office of Overseas Citizen Services toll free at 1-888-407-4747. This number is available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers who are unable to use toll-free numbers, such as those calling from overseas, may obtain information and assistance during these hours by calling 1-202-501-4444.
- **USCIS Web site** - <http://uscis.gov/>.

Lastly, did you know that some of the expenses for the adoption process might be reimbursable? Please see the Legal Office's handout on the reimbursement of adoption expenses program or contact your servicing personnel office for further information.