

Nightlight® Christian Adoptions International Adoption Program Description CHINA



GENERAL INFORMATION

Nightlight offers two China adoption programs: one for waiting orphans (identified as having special needs) the other for standard adoptions (children without an identified special need). Although costs are approximately the same, the waiting child program has a significantly shorter wait. We encourage any family who may be frustrated with the wait for a child from China to reconsider the China special needs program. Many of these children have very minor or correctable conditions. This outline details the Waiting Orphans Program.

The following websites are a useful place to start for reading more about China adoption and the country:

- www.china-ccaa.org: China Center of Adoption Affairs (CCAA) – click on "English" at site
- adoption.state.gov/country/china.html: U.S. State Department page about China adoption
- www.fwcc.org: Families with Children from China (F.C.C.)

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Nightlight Christian Adoptions is in partnership with three other adoption agencies for its China program directly licensed with the China Center of Adoption Affairs. Nightlight is committed to helping families with their adoptions from China. Our partner agencies handle the direct communication with China, but all client contact will be through Nightlight. Our China clients are dual clients of Nightlight Christian Adoptions and our partner agencies. The dossier is submitted under the letter head of the agency directly licensed in China (In Hague terms, Nightlight is the "Supervised Service Provider," and our partner agency is the "Primary Service Provider.")

China maintains a list of orphans with special needs who are available for adoption, and this list is distributed to all agencies with waiting child programs. When a family expresses an interest in adopting a particular child, a 72-hour hold is put on the child's availability so that the family can make a decision based a complete referral, which will include medical information. The family must make a decision during that 72-hour period.

CHILDREN AVAILABLE

Children from 12 months to school-age are in need of adoption through the Waiting Orphans Program. Minor special needs include: cleft lip and palate; minor orthopedic needs; missing digits; Ventricular Septal Defect (hole in the heart), which is generally correctable with surgery; and Hepatitis B, both active and non-active. Major special needs include: hearing impaired, seeing impaired, limb disfiguration, mental retardation, and others. In most cases, we see vast improvements in children with special needs once they are receiving proper medical care and living in a healthy environment.

ELIGIBILITY TO ADOPT

China's eligibility requirements state that only married, heterosexual couples may adopt. Both husband and wife must be between ages of 30 and 55 at the time the dossier goes to China, and they must have been married at least 2 years. (If either husband or wife has been previously divorced, they must be married at least 5 years at the time the dossier arrives in China.) Additionally, couples must be physically and mentally healthy (neither applicant is taking psychotropic drugs; neither applicant has a Body Mass Index of 40 or above; neither applicant has a history of cancer). Financially, the family's net assets must be over \$80,000, with a minimum salary of \$10,000 per family member, including the child to be adopted (minimum of \$40,000 in cases of childless couple). Both applicants must have at least a high school diploma. Neither applicant may have a criminal record. We have a special parental qualification form for you to complete. CCAA is somewhat flexible with families adopting children with special needs, and we can check with CCAA to see if you qualify.

PROCESS

1. Complete an **adoption homestudy** and **I-800A form** and receive Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) approval.
2. Gather **dossier** documents for certification and authentication. (You gather the documents, and Nightlight sends them for authentications.) This step can be worked on concurrently with the adoption homestudy.
3. Pre-identify a waiting child through the agency and send a **Letter of Intent (LOI)** to the CCAA indicating a desire to adopt that child. (The LOI is often sent to China with your dossier, step 5.)
4. About 2 weeks after the CCAA receives and approves your Letter of Intent, you will be issued a **Pre-Approval (PA)**. (If your dossier precedes your LOI, you will not receive a PA. Families wishing to adopt children with minor special needs who have already received correction surgery, must have their dossier logged in with the CCAA before they can be matched with a child.)
5. Once complete, your **dossier** is sent to CCAA, where it will be logged in and reviewed.
6. You will receive the **Letter of Approval (LOA)** about 3-4 months after both of the following have happened:
 - CCAA has received your Letter of Intent.
 - CCAA has logged in your dossier.
7. Upon receipt of LOA, the family starts the **I-800 process** with CIS. This process typically takes 1-2 weeks. During this time you also apply for your **travel visas**.
8. About 4 weeks after CIS has completed the I-800 process, you will receive your **Travel Approval (TA)** from China.
9. About 4 – 6 weeks later, travel to China to attend your child's **adoption** in the orphanage province.
10. Travel to the **U.S. Consulate** in Guangzhou, China, to receive your child's visa.
11. Bring your child **home** from China!

Perhaps the most confusing part of this process involves the timing of when families can pre-identify a child and send a Letter of Intent. Although pre-identification and the sending of the LOI can take place anytime after your homestudy is approved (and potentially before your dossier is complete), *typically* the LOI and the dossier are sent at the same time. The CCAA will not review your dossier until they have received and pre-approved (PA) your LOI.

TRAVEL

Families typically travel approximately 4 to 6 weeks after receiving their Travel Approval. Be aware that the agency will schedule the family's visa appointment at the U.S. Consulate. If possible, families will be organized into travel groups. Whether a family is in a group or not, they will be accompanied by an English speaking guide. Usually the trip lasts 12-14 days, though it could potentially be a little quicker (depending on the process in the province from which a family is adopting).

POST ADOPTION

China requires two agency-conducted post-placement reports, one at 6 months after adoption and the second at 12 months after the adoption.

COSTS

The program fee for a China Special Needs adoption is \$9,830-\$10,250. Additional estimated expenses of \$15,000 will bring the total cost to approximately \$24,510 to \$27,830. If you receive the full tax credit/refund of \$13,170, then your fees and expenses can be as low as \$11,600. Your out-of-pocket expenses may further be reduced if you receive scholarships or other employer-provided adoption benefits.

Please call or e-mail Lisa Prather, Lisa@Nightlight.org, with any questions.



CHINA SPECIAL NEEDS

The China special needs program, in which more than 500 children are on the Shared List are awaiting homes, is one of the most straightforward international programs. For those who are diligent in completing their paperwork, China is also one of the fastest programs in which to bring home a child—usually in about 9-12 months from the time that you send in your application. Yes, next year, you could have a child in your home.

Once your paperwork is logged into China, most likely you will receive a referral within a matter of days to a couple of weeks. This is true even for those who are seeking children with minor and correctable special needs. Although we have to always add the caveat that time frames can vary and we cannot always guarantee that you will be assigned a child as quickly as this, these are the time frames that we have been consistently experiencing with our families.

Not only is this special China program, which we call *Children in His Image Program*, one in which families have been able to adopt children quickly, it is also one of the most affordable programs.

The fees and expenses of the program total about \$25,000-\$30,000. If you consider the new generous tax credit/refund and adopt a child before December 31, 2011, the net cost to you could be as low as \$11,830.

You could further reduce your costs if you could get your employer to count some of your pay—up to \$13,170—as an adoption benefit. That income to you would not be federally taxed. If you earn under \$182,520, you could receive the full adoption benefits tax free. So let's say that you are not taxed on \$13,170 of your income—and save \$1,500 in taxes. Then you add in the \$13,170 that you could receive as a tax credit/refund, you could be getting back close to \$14,670 in tax benefits and refunds. (To receive the \$13,170 in credit/refund in addition to \$13,170 in full employer-provided benefits, you would have to spend \$26,340 on adoption fees and expenses.)

If you are fortunate enough to have an employer who provides outright adoption benefits, and you receive say \$5,000, this would mean that you receive the \$13,170 plus \$5,000 in employer benefits for a total of \$18,170. In fact, here in SC, state employees can receive up to \$10,000 in adoption benefits when adopting a child with special needs and \$5,000 for a non-special needs child. **For a SC state employee, your net cost of an adoption from China could be about \$2,000!!**

Other ways that you can offset the cost of an adoption is through fundraising and grants. If you were to receive about \$5,000 through grants and fundraising efforts and save about \$1,500 in taxes by having part of your salary used as tax-free employer-provided adoption benefits, you could further bring down the cost of your adoption by another \$6,500. This means that the net cost of your adoption could come to about \$5,330.

And now the news gets even better. Here at Nightlight, we are offering a \$1,000 scholarship to the first 10 families who apply to the China *Children in His Image Program* by June 1, 2010. After you send in the free preliminary application (www.nightlight.org/apply-for-adoption/default.aspx), and then receive the green light to complete the full application, you will receive the \$1,000 scholarship immediately.

If you want more information about this program, contact Lisa Prather, Assistant Director, at (864) 268-0570.