

Nightlight® Christian Adoptions International Adoption Program Description RUSSIA



GENERAL INFORMATION

If you are considering adopting from Russia please read the following information as required by the Hague Convention on International Adoptions. Inquiries should be directed to Ron Stoddart (Ron@Nightlight.org) or Kate Zyubenko (Kate@Nightlight.org), or call (970) 663-9751.

Information on international adoptions from Russia can be found at:

- <http://adoption.state.gov/country/russia.html>: Information on international adoptions from Russia at the U.S. Department of State web site
- <http://moscow.usembassy.gov/adoptions.html>: Information on international adoptions from Russia at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow web site
- <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>: Information on the country of Russia on the U.S. Department of State web site
- http://map.rin.ru/index_e.html: A map of Russia's regions.

Nightlight® Christian Adoptions has worked in Russia since 1992. Russia requires adoption agencies hold a permit to conduct adoption activities within the territory of the Russian Federation. Nightlight received its first permit in 2001. In July 2009 our permit to conduct direct adoption activities was revoked due to the late filing of a required report. We may reapply for a permit in July 2010. We have programs in several regions, including St. Petersburg and Tomsk. Until we are able to obtain a permit for in-country activities, we are partnering with other agencies which hold permits and have temporarily assumed responsibility for our in-country staff. We continue to maintain an office and staff in Moscow as a registered Non-Governmental Organization.

CHILDREN AVAILABLE

The orphanages in Russia are called Baby Houses and Detsky Dom's (Children's Homes). Babies from a few months of age to about 3-4 years stay in Baby Houses, while older children stay in Children's Homes. Children's Homes are further divided between pre-school orphanages (ages 4-7), school age orphanages (7-16) and combined orphanages. Some orphanages specialize in children with special needs, such as learning disabilities, vision impairments, orthopedic problems, etc. Many times children who have not been put in school by their parents will be assigned to orphanages where they will receive more remedial assistance, even though their intellectual capabilities may be good.

Not all children in Russian orphanages are available for adoption. Children become available if their parents have relinquished them for adoption, are deceased, or when the court terminates their parental rights. Like children in foster care within the United States the reasons for terminating parental rights are varied, but generally include neglect. Once a child is available for adoption, they must be placed on a local registry of adoptable children (for 1 month), then on a regional registry (1 month) and then on a Federal Data Bank of adoptable children (6 months), this process takes a total of 8 months. A child may be adopted by a Russian family or taken into foster care by relatives at any time prior to international adoption.

Babies are generally at least 9 months of age before they are eligible for international adoption. When a child has siblings, and the sibling is eligible for adoption, the siblings must be adopted together. There always seem to be more families waiting to adopt girls than boys of all ages. We will share as much information as we are able to obtain on a child; however, there will never be as much information on a child's background as we would like. Information on the child referred to you will be obtained on a family's first referral trip to Russia. The medical information is more critical for evaluating a baby for adoption since this is essentially all of the information available. As a child gets older, the importance of character, personality, temperament and intelligence increases.

ELIGIBILITY TO ADOPT

Married couples or single women may apply to adopt from Russia. We require that the adopting parents be no more than 45 years older than the child, although this requirement may be relaxed somewhat in the case of older children. The parents must be in good health. Questions as to the number of other children in the family and other considerations are evaluated on a case by case basis depending on the characteristics of the child who is sought for adoption. The orphanage director, the adoption officials or the court may impose other restrictions as they consider necessary or advisable.

PROCESS

It generally takes around 8-14 months to complete the adoption process (and sometimes longer for little girls). First you will need to complete your homestudy, get CIS (formerly INS) approval and prepare your dossier for Russia (about 3-5 months). Once your dossier has been filed with the local adoption officials in Russia, you will be considered for a referral. The more flexible you are and the older the child you hope to adopt is, the shorter the timeframe. No advance information on available children can be provided by persons other than the Russian adoption officials. Providing videos and medical information on children is specifically not allowed. (When older children have been identified through activities unrelated to adoption, i.e. hosting programs or missionary trips, the referral of the identified child can usually be obtained if they are legally eligible.)

Both parents must make the first trip, about one week, to Russia to receive the official referral of a child. On this trip, you will receive a referral and get to know the child. You will be able to ask a variety of questions concerning the child's medical and social history. In addition, you will be able to access independent physicians to assist you in evaluating a child. If you do not accept the first referral, you may be able to receive a second referral on the same trip depending on the age of the child requested. Once you have accepted the referral, you would return home to await a court date. The court date is usually set around 8 weeks after your first trip (allowing time for verification to be received from Moscow that your child has been on the Federal Data Bank for more than six months and the court to review your dossier). Both adopting parents are required to be present in court. Russian law provides for a 10-day waiting period before an adoption decree becomes effective. This 10-day period can be waived by the judge if s/he believes it is in the best interest of the child, but such a waiver is not common. Once the adoption is completed, a new birth certificate is issued for the child, a Russian passport is issued in the child's new name and you travel to Moscow to obtain the child's immigrant visa. You would normally travel directly home from Moscow.

TRAVEL

Once your dossier is completed, we will provide you with a "Travel Package" which outlines all of the details of your travel (2-3 trips). We will make all of your in-country lodging reservations and you may make whatever air travel arrangements you prefer (although we will also help you with this step if requested). Your first trip will be about 5 days and your court trip will typically be 5 days. Assuming the 10 days are not waived, your third trip will be about 7 days (only one parent needs to travel on the third trip).

POST ADOPTION

Once you return home, you will need to immediately register your child's passport with the Russian Embassy (we will provide you with instructions). At this time, Russia requires that you complete a minimum of 4 post-adoption visits with your social worker to evaluate your child's adjustment into your family. Along with several pictures, these reports will be sent to the orphanage staff and officials for receipt in Russia at 6 months, 1 year, 2 years and 3 years after your child's adoption is finalized. (Please be prepared to be flexible as government requirements for post-adoption reports occasionally change and you will be expected to fulfill the most recent requirement.)

COSTS

The costs for an adoption from Russia are explained on the current Fee Schedule and range from \$33,400 to \$42,300. The Fees and Costs include Program Fees, Orphanage Donations, and Estimated Client Coordinated Expenses including travel, lodging, CIS fees and misc. costs. We have a different fee structure for children under age 7 to encourage the adoption of older children. We make every effort to give you a realistic budget to avoid surprises. However, variations may result from differences in homestudy costs, travel and actual length of stay in Russia.

