

Important Post-Adoption Documents

Child Arrival Files

The child arrival files are the documents you received in-country pertaining to your adoption, in both languages, and include:

- Adoption Decree/Adoption Registration/Final Ruling/Final Judgment
- Child's Birth Certificate from Country of Adoption
- Relinquishment/Termination of Parental Rights/Abandonment Certificate (depending on the country you are adopting from, this information may also be included in the adoption decree)

Certificate of Citizenship

A Certificate of Citizenship is permanent proof that your child has U.S. citizenship. This document should be stored in a safe place.

For families in which both parents finalized their adoption abroad and whose adopted child arrived in the U.S. **prior to age 14**, the Certificate of Citizenship will be sent to you automatically from USCIS.

For families in which both parents finalized their adoption abroad and whose adopted child entered the U.S. **between the ages of 14 and 17**, your child will be invited to an oath/swearing in ceremony, where they will receive their Certificate of Citizenship.

For families in which only one parent finalized the adoption abroad in a non-Hague country or for families who regularly reside outside the U.S., your child will not receive a Certificate of Citizenship automatically. You must apply for your child's Certificate of Citizenship. Contact CCAI for the steps you will need to take for your specific situation.

Social Security Card

Most families receive a social security card automatically in the mail 1-3 weeks after arriving home. If you receive the card automatically, it may be in your child's original name. If that is the case, then you will need to file for a name change/corrected card with Social Security. If you can, wait for the Certificate of Citizenship to arrive before getting a corrected card, then you will also be able to update your child's citizenship status with Social Security at the same time. The social security number will not change so feel free to use it in the mean-time.

If you do not receive the social security card automatically, then you will need to apply for one. The best option is to apply after receiving a Certificate of Citizenship, so that your child will be given a card in their American name and also be listed as a U.S. citizen with Social Security. If a card is needed more quickly, the child's U.S. visa can be substituted for the Certificate temporarily, but a copy of the Certificate will be needed to change your child's name and/or citizenship status.

Re-Adoption/Validation of Foreign Adoption/Domestication Court Decree

Many states require that families who adopt internationally complete a re-adoption, validation of foreign adoption, or domestication process in their local court after arriving home with their adopted

child. A re-adoption, validation of foreign adoption, or domestication process in their local court may also be required in order to obtain a U.S. state issued birth certificate/certificate of foreign birth for your child, and if so, you can complete the name change at the same time. Your home study agency can provide you with the most up to date information for completing a name change and obtaining a U.S. state issued birth certificate/certificate of foreign birth in your state of residence.

U.S. State Issued Birth Certificate

CCAI highly recommend obtaining a U.S. state issued birth certificate/certificate of foreign birth for your child. This document is easily recognizable and easy to replace if needed. Some states require families to first register their adoptions with the local court, or re-adopt their children, before a birth certificate can be issued. If this is required, it is important to complete this process so that there are no legal loopholes for your adoption in your state, even though it is completely final on the national level. Your home study agency can provide you with the most current information on your state's requirements.

During validation or re-adoption you may legally change your child's name at birth to the new name you selected for them at the time of adoption. This will be reflected in the validation or re-adoption court decree and the U.S. state issued birth certificate.

The court decree issued by your county/state of residence and the U.S./state issued birth certificate will be in English. If you should you need to prove the adoption throughout your child's life, it will be easier for you and/or your child to be able to refer to these two documents that are written in English, connect you to one another in a legal parent/child relationship, and are easily recognizable and accepted legal documents. It is easier and much more affordable to replace a state issued adoption decree and U.S./state issued birth certificate in cases of loss or theft than it may be trying to obtain a new certified copy of the original ones issued in the foreign country, which will likely be impossible.

Since federal laws, such as Social Security, may be based upon a state's underlying law regarding adoption, many U.S. states will not accept a foreign adoption decree or foreign birth certificate in determining an adopted child's eligibility for social security benefits, but may instead require a state issued adoption decree and state issued birth certificate.

An adoption decree and birth certificate issued from your state of residence will confirm your child's adoption status under U.S. laws, protecting your legal parent/child relationship.