

**EXPERT Q&A WEBINAR:**

# **Adoption Paperwork, Explained**

***Ketiwe Boahene***

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# **Adoption Paperwork, Explained**

**Presenter:**

**Ketiwe Boahene**



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# What is a home study?

A home study is a written document that includes the following:

- Requested documents
- Parent preparation and training
- Interviews with a social worker (varies based on state)
- Child request
- Personal history
- References (varies based on state and agency)
- State and federal clearance (varies based on state)

# What is included in a home study?

- Home Study Narrative
- Criminal History Affidavit
- Criminal Background Checks
- Child Abuse Registry Checks
- Business and Personal References
- Financial Statement/Taxes/Budget
- Medical Forms/Letters
- Psychiatric Evaluation/Therapist Letters
- Birth and Marriage Certificates and Divorce decrees



# Home Study Narrative

- List of necessary information the worker will need to explore and review with you during visits
  - Includes information about your personal history
  - Current family dynamics
  - Guardianship
  - Perception and experience with adoption
  - Health
  - Personal description
  - Hobbies
  - Home and community
- \*Example of questions: Describe your present relationships with your family members, parents, siblings, significant other, and other relatives, or whomever would be your child(ren)'s guardian in the event that you are unable to care for him/her?

# Criminal History Affidavit

- Self report of criminal history background
- Requires copies of any violations or dispositions from court (if there is any criminal history)
- Requires a statement signed under the penalty of perjury
- Criminal history is not always a disqualifier

# Criminal Background Check



- Fingerprint through the office of family and children's services go through a form of child welfare entity
- Includes both state and federal
- New York retains state prints (federal prints need to be renewed)
- Livescan locations are based on where you live
- The results are released directly to your agency
- You can also be printed through the court in which you are certified, if you are working with an attorney
- May incur an additional cost
- Required for applicants and household members age 18 and older.

# Child Abuse Registry Checks

- May incur additional costs
- Varies by state
- For example, New York requires a list of all addresses for the past 28 years
- International adoptions require clearances from all states and countries you have resided in since the age of 18
- Required for applicants and household members age 18 and older.



# Business and Personal References

- Business reference is used to verify income
- Must be written and signed by either a direct supervisor or Human Resources representative
- If you are self employed, the reference can be written by a CPA
- Personal references seek to understand you as a person or as a couple, your relationship with that person, as well as your experience with children
- Personal references cannot be relatives (varies by state)
- Some references may need to be notarized (international)

# Financial Statement/Taxes/Budget

- A financial statement is a self report of the required economic aspects of applicants' lives
- This information is required for both international and domestic adoption, as noted in state regulations and Hague guidelines
- List of sources of income, which includes salary, bonuses, rental property, pension
- List of retirement investments, like IRA
- Bank account
- Financial obligations
- Residence
- Life insurance



# Financial Statement/Taxes/Budget Cont.

- Taxes are used as a means of verifying finances
- In some cases, a budget form is provided to families that may have an income that is disproportionate to their expenditure.
- For international cases, USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) sets explicit poverty guidelines based on family size and income. These guidelines can be used as a reference if you are concerned about finances and are adopting internationally.
- For domestic adoption, each state has varying regulations as it relates to finances and it varies from agency to agency. It may be helpful to request an individualized consultation if you have any concerns.

# Medical Forms/Letters

- Physical Examination must have occurred recently
- Some agencies require it to be completed less than 6 months prior to the writing of the home study
- If you are currently on any medication, an additional letter is requested of the physician. It should indicate the dosage and affirm that you are in good health and your prognosis does not affect your ability to parent.
- If there are any children or household members over the age of 18 in the home, they will need medical letters.



# Psychiatric Evaluation/Therapist Letters

- For international adoptions, some countries require a psychiatric evaluation as part of the home study process
- For domestic adoption, this may be required, depending on the applicant's history.
- If you are currently seeing a therapist, please be sure to submit a letter affirming your ability to parent.
- In some cases, judges have asked for therapist letters at finalization. Obtaining this beforehand prevents delays during the finalization process.

# Birth and Marriage Certificates and Divorce Decrees

- Most adoptions require certified copies of birth certificates and marriage certificate
- It varies by state; most states have online systems through which you can order a new birth certificate or marriage certificate
- For example, if you were born in New York City, you can obtain certified copies of your birth certificate in person, by mail, or via the internet [www.nyc.gov/health](http://www.nyc.gov/health)
- If you were born out of state try going to [vitalchek.com](http://vitalchek.com). This is an excellent resource for ordering certified copies of your birth or marriage certificate.

# Post Home Study: International

- For those adopting internationally, you will need to complete country specific paperwork. Clients adopting internationally are also required to complete an I-600A or an I-800A. This paperwork is to determine your suitability and qualification to adopt a child. It is filed directly with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- There are several supporting documents required with these forms. This varies depending on if you are adopting from a Hague Convention Country or not.
- Use this link to determine if you are adopting from a Hague Convention Country:  
<http://travel.state.gov/content/adoptionsabroad/en/hague-convention/convention-countries.html>





## Q & A

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# Questions?

Please enter your questions for Ketiwe Boahene, in the box to your right.



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