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Ethiopia

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Notice: Adoption Processing at the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa

The Department of State continues to be concerned about reports highlighting adoption related fraud, malfeasance, and abuse in Ethiopia, and acknowledges the concerns expressed by families over the integrity of the adoption process. The U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa actively tracks all adoption visa cases, incorporating information provided by adoption agencies and the Government of Ethiopia, to ensure that the adoption process continues to operate transparently and ethically.

The Ethiopian government requires that adoptive parents must appear at the Ethiopian federal court hearing for their adoptive child in order for the adoption to be approved. If there are two adoptive parents but only one parent can attend the hearing, special permission from the federal court must be obtained in advance,* and the attending parent must have a power of attorney from the other. It generally takes three weeks or more after the court date for the adoption agency to obtain the documentation necessary for an immigrant visa application, including the adopted child's birth certificate and Ethiopian passport. Adoptive parents can expect to wait at least one month after the court hearing for a visa interview appointment.

Adoptive parents should be aware that in all adoption visa cases worldwide, an I-604 investigation must be completed in connection with every I-600 application. Depending on the circumstances of the case, this investigation may take several weeks or even months to complete. Additional information may be required to determine the facts surrounding a child's relinquishment or abandonment and whether a child meets the definition of an orphan under U.S. immigration law. The Embassy strongly recommends that adoptive parents who return to the U.S. after the court hearing not travel again to Ethiopia for the immigrant visa process until they have confirmed with their adoption agency that the Embassy has scheduled a visa interview. Those who plan to stay in Ethiopia between the court hearing and interview should obtain Ethiopian visas in advance of travel, and ensure the validity of their visas to avoid immigration proceedings and/or significant fines.

* If only one parent meets the adoptive child before the court date, the child will qualify for an IR-4, not an IR-3 visa (which means that the child will not become a U.S. citizen upon entry to the United States and will have to be re-adopted in the United States).

The Embassy's Adoptions Unit can be reached at consadoptionaddis@state.gov.

Please continue to monitor this website for updated information.