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## Ethiopia

March 4, 2010

### Notice: Change in Processing Timeline for Adoption Cases

The Department of State shares families' concerns about recent media reports alleging direct recruitment of children from birth parents by adoption service providers or their employees. In response to these reports, the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa has implemented some changes to adoption visa processing. Adoptive parents should be aware that an I-604 (*Determination on Child for Adoption*, sometimes referred to as "*orphan investigation*") must be completed in connection with every I-600 application. Depending on the circumstances of the case, this investigation may take up to several weeks or even months to complete. Therefore, adoptive parents should not plan to travel to Ethiopia until they have confirmed with their adoption agency that their visa interview appointment has been confirmed.

Adoption agencies submit case paperwork to the U.S. Embassy for review before the Embassy schedules the immigrant visa appointment. In some cases the I-604 determination could take several weeks or more from the time a case is submitted to the U.S. Embassy to the scheduling of a visa interview appointment. We understand that in such cases this will result in a longer period before parents are able to bring their adopted children to the U.S. However, this additional scrutiny is required to ensure that the adoption is legal under both U.S. and Ethiopian law. The U.S. Embassy will work with adoptive parents and their adoption agency to ensure that each case is processed in the most expeditious manner possible in accordance with laws and regulations. Families should continue to work through their agency to schedule immigrant visa appointments and answer questions regarding pending cases.

If families have concerns about their adoption, we ask that they share this information with the Embassy, particularly if it involves possible fraud or misconduct specific to your child's case. The Embassy takes all allegations of fraud or misconduct seriously.

The best way to contact the Embassy is by email at [ConsAdoptionAddis@state.gov](mailto:ConsAdoptionAddis@state.gov). Please include your name, your child's name, your adoption agency, the date of the adoption (month and year), and, if possible, the immigrant visa case number for your child's case (this number begins with the letters ADD followed several numbers and can be found on any document sent to you by the National Visa Center). Please let us know if we have your permission to share concerns about your specific case with Ethiopian government officials.

We strongly encourage you to register any complaint that you may have about an adoption agency in the following ways:

- You may file a complaint with the [state licensing authority](#) where your adoption agency is licensed and conducts business. The Child Welfare Information Gateway, which is maintained by the Department of Health and Human Services, provides such a list.
- You may also file a report with the state's [Better Business Bureau](#).
- If your agency is a Hague-accredited adoption service provider, you are encouraged to file a complaint on the [Hague Complaint Registry](#) located at the link below. This information will be used by the accrediting entities to evaluate the agency in connection with the renewal of its accreditation status.

The U.S. Embassy continues to work with the Government of Ethiopia to ensure that appropriate safeguards exist to protect prospective adoptive children, their birth parents, and prospective adoptive parents. Please continue to monitor [adoption.state.gov](#) for updated information.