



Mission of TEARS (Ontario)

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Memorandum to: Adoptive Applicants for South Africa

From: Gordon Lewis
Executive Director, Mission of TEARS (Ontario)

Regarding: Homestudy and Dossier Documentation

I am writing to provide information concerning the importance of applicants having current dossier documents in South Africa and to confirm agency requirements in this regard.

For clarification of terms, a **“homestudy package”** includes the total of all documents that are required to be completed within a homestudy assessment (e.g. medicals, police clearances, references). The provincial adoption authority issues a *Letter of Approval* based on the review and approval of a homestudy package. Each province sets out its own homestudy requirements and time lines for expiry of a *Letter of Approval* (12 or 24 months).

A **“dossier”** includes the total of all documents required by the child’s country of origin (South Africa) for an applicant to be considered for international adoption from that country. The dossier contains some of the homestudy documents as well as other documents that are not included in the homestudy package (e.g. passport, birth certificate, marriage licence).

Mission of TEARS (Ontario) provides applicants with a list of all required dossier documents and our office is available for individual questions. The agency reviews and verifies that all dossier documents are complete and in conformity with the requirements of South Africa before forwarding the dossier to South Africa. Dossier documents are received by our foreign partner agency and a matching process takes place to locate appropriate applicants for children who are available for intercountry adoption. It is the responsibility of the adoptive applicants to ensure that the documents in their dossier are current and will not expire prior to court finalization. In order to assist with this we have noted some agency protocol below.

Homestudy Approval:

Provincial Letters of Approval for homestudies are valid for either 12 or 24 months depending on the province. Mission of TEARS (Ontario) must have a current Letter of Approval for an applicant **both** at the time of child proposal as well as at the time of court finalization. For South African adoptions, the court finalization date occurs approximately three months after the

referral of a child proposal. Applicants must ensure that there is always 3 months valid time left on their dossier documents (valid before expiry), including their Letter of Approval. This requires proactive monitoring.

Police Clearances:

RCMP and local police clearances are considered valid for 12 months in South Africa. Police clearances must be updated to have 3 months validity left on them at all times.

Passports:

The passport applicants use to travel must be the same passport that they present in their dossier for court. Therefore if you renew your passport after your initial dossier submission, you must advise the agency and provide 4 notarized copies of the updated passport to the agency, well in advance of travelling.

Address:

The Court in South Africa will review dossier documents to ensure they are current. If applicants move after providing the agency with their dossier documents, it will require that a homestudy update is completed to reflect the new home environment and the issuance of an updated provincial Letter of Approval.

Child Proposals:

A child proposal is the stage at which the child's country of origin proposes a specific child to the applicants and is also the term used to describe the package of documents that are forwarded about a child. Understanding when any specific family may receive the referral of a child cannot be exactly predetermined. On a case by case basis applicants wait anywhere from about 15 months to 24 months or longer after their file has been submitted to South Africa to receive a child proposal. Applicant families are notified individually when a child proposal is referred for them. Notification is given to applicants by either their provincial ministry, the adoption agency that completed their homestudy or by Mission of TEARS (Ontario) and their adoption practitioner, depending on the protocol used in their province. A child proposal from the agency will not be forwarded for processing for applicants who have expired documents.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)

You must complete an application with CIC to sponsor the immigration of your adopted child, which can be done during the time you are completing your homestudy. The application needs to be updated after 2 years (if you have not gone to court to finalize an adoption by that time). If your CIC application is nearing 2 years old, please contact CIC to request an extension to your application.

Communication

Communication with our office is important throughout the entire adoption process particularly regarding the importance of the maintaining valid and current dossier documents. As the time line between child proposal and traveling overseas is only about two months, coordinated

communication is necessary to avoid any mistakes being made leading up to the excitement of finally traveling overseas.

Once a child proposal is made to a family and they have consented to it, email communication between the family and the agency begins to include our foreign partner representative, Ms Robyn Shepstone. Robyn's role is to work with the agency and applicants as we coordinate together, a child proposal referral for each family. Robyn provides and coordinates vital information necessary to complete the South African side of the adoption, including information about your child, travel, accommodation and a tentative Court date for your adoption hearing in South Africa. Any e-mail communication with Robyn should always be copied to Jocelyn at our agency at info@missionoftears.com.

Robyn assists the agency to provide adoption services that are child-centred, objective and impartial. Email communication with her should only be related to a specific and current adoption case. It is not appropriate for adoptive parents who have completed their adoption and who are considering adopting a second child to continue to communicate with Robyn (or share photographs) after their first adoption is completed. This practice is in place in order to ensure that there is no room at all for any perception of favouritism as developed through email relationships. We ask that all families adhere to this policy.

Post adoption reports and services are managed by our agency office.

If you have any questions about the contents of this memo or regarding document preparation please contact Jocelyn MacDonald at (416) 449-0018 or info@missionoftears.com.

Sincerely,



Gordon Lewis
Executive Director
Mission of TEARS (Ontario)