



**New Hope For Children**  
Specializing in Russian Adoption since 1993

## frequently asked questions

### 1. Why should I choose Russia over other countries I might be thinking of adopting from?

- **Experience:** New Hope for Children (NHFC) (formerly, New Hope Christian Services-NHCS) was one of the first agencies facilitating adoptions in Russia since it became open to international families in 1991 and accordingly has extensive experience to provide the most seamless adoption possible. Aleksa Fleszar, NHFC Director, began facilitating the adoption of her daughter in 1991 without an agency and later helped the founding of NHCS in 1993.
- **Speed:** Russia currently offers a very fast adoption timeline-current wait is less than one year (one of recent parents' fast adoption was completed in 3 months from filing), making it a program of choice for parents wishing to have a fast adoption.
- **Parental Right Termination:** Before an official referral to adopt a child is made to a prospective adoptive parent(s), all biological parental rights have been terminated or renounced so there is no risk that the biological parents will "change their mind" after the adoption is finalized in court. Relatives may petition to take guardianship of the child before adoption by a foreigner, but only through the legal authorities and the court. Once the court decision has come into effect, that is no longer possible. Adoptions are closed in Russia, and no biological relatives can have access to any information after the adoption.
- **Decision:** Unlike other countries like China, Russia offers the prospective adoption parent(s) the opportunity to meet their referral and have an independent medical examination performed prior to deciding to move forward with the adoption, leaving the final decision with the parents.

### 2. Why should I choose New Hope for Children as our/my agency

We only provide adoption services in Russia and accordingly consider ourselves Russian adoption specialists, as we are well-versed in the process in all regions we work in, are intimately familiar with Russian culture, have Russian legal experts on staff and are committed to helping Russian orphans. Since we only facilitate adoptions in one country, we are a small agency that can provide prospective parent(s) an intimate experience committed to the highest of ethical standards.

Additionally, please see the "Why Choose Us" tab on our website.

### 3. What is the average wait time to adopt a child from Russia?

Currently the average wait time from the start of the process to bringing your child home is less than one year, depending on the prospective adoptive parent(s) health and age preferences of the child. Our fastest adoption in recent years was completed in 2010 in 3 months from filing the dossier. Currently there are many, many more children available for adoption in Russia than prospective parent(s), making it a program of choice for parent(s) wishing to have a fast adoption.

### 4. Could you please provide a brief overview of the adoption process.

In summary, the process is as follows:

Prospective parent(s) pick a placement agency (like New Hope for Children) and have a homestudy completed by their local agency/social worker (or New Hope for Children if they are New Hampshire residents). They then prepare a dossier of documents to file in Russia. Once the documents are filed, the Ministry Committee in Russia makes a referral and the parents travel to meet the child and have the child examined by an independent physician. Once parent(s) have accepted the referral of the specific child, they return home and wait for a court date. The court date is scheduled when the child's and the adoptive parents' documents are all complete, usually within a month or two. The court decision is made final after a 10 business day wait period, at which time the child is issued a Russian passport. With the child's documents and the court decision, parent(s) and child travel to Moscow to the American Embassy to obtain a US Visa for the child and at the same time register the child with the Russian Ministry as required. Subsequently the adoption process is completed and the parents return home with their child.

To provide more detail, below details the steps that are generally taken:

- 1. Meeting with NHFC:** All prospective adoptive parents will have an opportunity to meet with representatives from NHFC as many times as necessary to discuss the adoption process to ensure they are well prepared for the road ahead and to also ensure that NHFC believes the parent(s) are a right "fit" for Russian adoption. Topics discussed include, but are not limited to, the entire process from start to finish, potential health or developmental delays of orphaned children, what to expect during your travel to Russia, and the cost/financial implications of adopting internationally.
- 2. Home Study:** All prospective adoption parents must complete a home study by a licensed social worker. NHFC has its own social worker on staff, licensed to perform home studies in the State of NH. If you reside outside of NH, a licensed social worker in your state under a local agency will complete the home study under a management agreement with NHFC.
- 3. Dossier Preparation:** Russia requires many documents (entitled the "Dossier") to be compiled for submittal to the Ministry Committee in Russia that provides the referral of your prospective child. Every document submitted to Russia has a specific format and must be Apostilled by your State's Secretary. Many parents find this step daunting as the paperwork is quite extensive. NHFC is here to help you every step of the way to complete your dossier. We have a network of agency regional representatives (all past parents) in many parts of the country, and chances are that you live close enough to one of them to use them as a resource.

- 4. Dossier Submittal:** Once completed, your dossier will be submitted to the Ministry Committee in Russia that will make your referral. You may or may not automatically receive basic information about your child before traveling, but you have the right to ask for the basic information, which includes age, sex and the official medical diagnosis.
- 5. 1<sup>st</sup> Trip to Russia\*:** Your first trip to Russia will be to receive your official referral from the Committee and to meet your prospective child and decide if you want to proceed with the adoption.
- 6. 2<sup>nd</sup> Trip to Russia\*:** Your second trip is for the court proceedings to legalize the adoption.
- 7. 3<sup>rd</sup> Trip to Russia\*:** Your third trip is to pick up your child from the orphanage (yea!!), to obtain the child's passport, and to finalize adoption requirements with the Russian and US Embassies in both the city of the adoption and Moscow.

\* Note: See the FAQ "How many trips will I need to make to Russia and what is the length of time for each trip?" for estimated time of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> trips and how to combine trips 2 and 3.

The length of time to complete each step is dependent upon many variables including the availability of social workers to complete the home study, availability of the parents to provide all documents required for the Dossier, and the prospective adoptive parent(s) health and age preferences of the child.

For more information on the details of the steps and timelines, please contact us, and our Russian Program Director, Arna Bronstein will answer all your questions.

## **5. What age children are available to adopt from Russia?**

Currently children ranging from 9 months to 14 years are available to adopt from Russia, including sibling groups.

## **6. Can I adopt a "healthy" child from Russia and what does that mean? What typical delays or health concerns should I/we expect?**

Given that the adoptive children from Russia have been living in an orphanage, the majority of children are developmentally delayed, (typical of institutional living) which most children very quickly overcome after being placed with their forever families. Some of the children are considered physically "healthy" and others have minor, correctable health issues. Special needs children are also up for adoption. The parent(s) may specify the health issues they are or are not willing to accept prior to submitting their dossier for a referral.

## **7. Where do the available children reside until adoption?**

All children available for adoption reside in government run orphanages (called "baby houses" in Russia). Some have been there since birth (mother terminated her parental rights at the birthing hospital) and some came from families that were either unable to care for the children or had their parental rights terminated by Russian authorities.

## **8. What are the requirements to adopt from Russia; i.e. are there health requirements or age limitations for parents?**

Currently Russia is open to married couples and single women. The younger parent should be no more than 48 years older than the child being adopted, but exceptions have been made in specific cases. Russia requires that the parent(s) submit to an 8 specialty medical examination (*called the "8MD"*), the same examination that the child goes through *before the referral is made*. In the Russian adoption code, there is a list of serious physical and psychological illnesses that preclude adoption and your family doctor in the USA will be required to sign forms that the parent(s) does not have an illness on the list as one of the first steps in the process. This list is composed of serious illnesses only, such as HIV/AIDS.

## **9. How much will it cost?**

The costs of adoption in Russia is between \$28,000 and \$30,000 without payments to third parties. With payments to third parties (home study, travel, medicals, visa fees, apostilles and notaries etc., which are variable) the range is between \$43,000 and \$49,000. Our fee schedule details the cost breakdown (to be provided upon request). We believe in full transparency of all costs, including estimates of 3<sup>rd</sup> party costs. There are no hidden surprises with NHFC when it comes to expenses/fees. NHFC constantly compares ourselves with other Russian adoption agencies to ensure we are providing a cost competitive adoption.

Also see our financial assistance page for ways to finance your adoption and for information regarding the IRS adoption tax credit (up to \$13,170 in 2011).

## **10. Can we connect with other adoptive families through your agency?**

Yes, in fact connecting with parent(s) that have recently adopted is encouraged so you can obtain different perspectives of the process. We have a list of adoptive parent(s) that are willing to speak with prospective adoptive parent(s); please contact us should you wish to connect with one of our New Hope families.

## **11. What regions do you work in? Where can I get more travel information?**

We currently work in St. Petersburg, Pskov, Orenburg & Leningrad Region, although the bulk of the recently completed adoptions have been in St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg is often called the Venice of the North and is one of the most attractive tourist destinations.

Below are some links to the cities we work in as well as other useful information:

*St. Petersburg* <http://www.saint-petersburg.com/virtual-tour/>

*Pskov* <http://russiatrek.org/pskov-city>

*Orenburg* <http://russiatrek.org/orenburg-oblast>

*Leningrad Region* <http://www.rostour.com/russia/leningradskaya/>

### **History and Art**

*History* <http://www.bucknell.edu/x20136.xml>

*All about Russia* <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

*Russian painting* [http://tars.rollins.edu/Foreign\\_Lang/Russian/ruspaint.html](http://tars.rollins.edu/Foreign_Lang/Russian/ruspaint.html)

## Language

*Beginning Russian Language* <http://langintro.com/rintro/first.htm>

*This tutorial is designed as a beginning point for a casual learner. It does not require any special Russian fonts or software. This tutorial requires Netscape Navigator 3.0 or above or Internet Explorer™®© 4.0 or above. Site also has sound—follow the instructions given on the home page.*

### **12. How much will I/we know about the child prior to traveling?**

According to Russian law, the Committee makes a referral and may or may not send you basic information about the child in a timely fashion. Often they provide the age and the sex only, but before you travel you have the right to request the official medical diagnosis. You may request an independent medical exam for an additional \$500, which will be scheduled during your 1<sup>st</sup> trip and a separate consultation with the English speaking MD for an additional \$100. This doctor can review the orphanage's Russian medical record with you in English. You will also meet with the orphanage director/doctor and have the right to ask as many questions as you desire about your referral's general history and medical history.

### **13. How many trips will I need to make to Russia and what is the length of time for each trip?**

Russia requires 2 or 3 trips, depending on if the adoptive parent(s) are able to combine trip 2 and 3.

The 1<sup>st</sup> trip is to meet your referral and perform medical exams at your discretion, which will be at least 5 full business days.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> trip is for the court proceedings to legalize the adoption, which is about 2 business days. After the court date there is a 10-business day waiting period between the court date and finalization of the adoption. Parent(s) can stay in the city of the adoption for the 10-day waiting period or they may go back home and return to Russia to take home their child (note: only one parent need be present to complete the adoption process after the 10-business day waiting period).

After the 10-day waiting period on the 2<sup>nd</sup> trip, or 3<sup>rd</sup> trip if the parent(s) opt, about 5-7 more business days in the city of the adoption are required to complete the adoption process. After all proceedings are completed in the city of the adoption, the parent(s) and child will travel to Moscow for approximately 4-5 business days to complete the adoption requirements with the US Embassy & Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs registration. From Moscow the parent(s) and child will return home to the US with their adoption completed.

### **14. Will the agency assist us in obtaining VISAs, making travel arrangements, and other ancillary needs?**

Parent(s) will make all of their own flight arrangements and hotel arrangements (note: in Orenburg the in-country facilitator working for NHFC can book your hotel). Parent(s) are also responsible for obtaining their own travel visa. However, we will recommend a travel agent that we have referred parent(s) to over many years who is experienced in arranging travel for our adoptive parent(s). This agent will assist you in obtaining your tourist visas. Much more information on travel will be provided to you in a detailed travel packet and informational e-mails prior to each trip. Our goal is to make the

travels and logistics as seamless as possible and to assist you every step of the way.

**15. Is it safe to travel to Russia? Can I fly direct to these regions? How do people travel once they are in Russia?**

Generally Russia is considered a safe country to travel to, although anyone traveling to a foreign country should take precautions. Currently there are no travel warnings issued by the US Department of State for Russia (except for Chechnya and other parts of North Caucasus where NHFC does not facilitate adoptions). For ongoing travel warnings and what to expect when traveling to Russia, please see the US DOS Website at: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1006.htm](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1006.htm)

Depending on where you live in the US and the city of your adoption, direct flights may be available or connecting flights through Europe. Once in Russia there are domestic airlines or trains to take you from the city of your adoption to Moscow.

**16. Will I be alone in Russia during the process or assisted?**

You will never be left alone during any part of your adoption. NHFC has its own office and staff in each city that we facilitate adoptions that are there to help you every step of the way, including airport transfers and all visits to government offices, orphanage, etc. Our staff has also been very gracious in helping parent/s negotiate the city during their free time, shop and visit tourist attractions. They are not personal tour guides, but are there to help if you need them.