

ETHICA'S ETHIOPIA TRANSPARENCY SURVEY

SURVEY FOR U.S. ADOPTION SERVICE PROVIDERS PLACING CHILDREN FROM ETHIOPIA

Response from Adoption Advocates International (WA)

Agency Name Adoption Advocates International

Website <http://adoptionadvocates.org>

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What efforts does your agency employ to ensure ethical adoptions in Ethiopia?

AAI is committed to working in an ethical manner and we work only with others who have the same reputation.

How long has your agency operated in Ethiopia? In what year is your license up for renewal?

Twelve years, we received initial approval of the government in November of 1997. Current registration expires January 2013.

Does your agency partner with any US agency that is not currently licensed to process adoptions in Ethiopia?

No

How many Ethiopian adoptions has your agency completed for the years 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009?

2006-228, 2007-204, 2008-186, 2009-193

How many waiting families, approximately, are currently in your program?

STAFF IN ETHIOPIA

What is the address of your agency's office(s) in Ethiopia?

Our office is located on the compound of Layla House but it doesn't have a street address.

What are the names of your in country representatives?

Our representative is an attorney by the name of Temesgen.

Would you mind sharing pictures of your in country representatives?

Are your Ethiopian offices managed and run by your US office? If not, who runs them? Please explain.

We have a local management committee of professional staff and the U.S. director is on the management committee

What are the names of your agency's care centers/transitional homes? In what areas of the country are they located (zone or region) and what are the addresses (PO Box)?

Layla House, located in Mekenesa
Opportunity House for disabled children in Mekenesa

Please give the number of people on staff at each center and whether they are full- or part-time, along with the average number of children cared for at any one time within the centers.

130 to 150 children in both facilities, and about 200 staff, total

From what areas (zone or district) of the country do you receive children available for adoption? Do you have satellite offices there? If so, what are the addresses (PO Box)? Please give the name(s) of the person in charge of each satellite office and list the number of people on staff at each.

We receive children from many orphanages in various parts of Ethiopia and we do not have a satellite office.

Do you use freelance social workers or recruiters in Ethiopia?

No

Please list agency programs in any other African countries and briefly describe.

We have a similar but smaller program in Ghana and are placing from some other countries as well, on a small scale.

ORPHANAGES/FOSTER HOMES/NGOS

With which orphanages/foster homes/NGOs do you work? Does your agency have an exclusive contract with these orphanages/foster homes/NGOs? Does your agency donate money to assist these orphanages/foster homes/NGOs? Please note whether the orphanages/foster homes/NGOs are state run or private and in which city they are located, along with the director's name.

We do not have an exclusive relationship with any orphanage. We work with Kidene Mihiret, and Sele Enat and Missionaries of Charity in Addis as well as the government orphanage Kebebe Tshaye, all in Addis and many other smaller programs in various areas. We provide support for the orphanages but it is not based on the number of children we receive from them, it is an amount determined annually.

Please list any other facilities/organizations from which you are referred children available for adoption and include the name of the facility's director.

What kind of oversight does your agency provide in orphanages/foster homes/NGOs to ensure that they are acting ethically and children are being kept safe and healthy?

Our social workers and staff and volunteers visit on a regular basis.

At what point in the adoption process are children moved from orphanages/foster homes/NGOs to your agency's care center?

It varies depending on the orphanages preference and our space availability. Most often children come to Layla when their legal documents are complete to the satisfaction of our legal staff and social workers.

BACKGROUND OF CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION

How does your agency assess the adoptability of each child? Please describe what sort of investigation is done. Are adoptive families permitted to pursue their own investigation of their referred child's background if they so choose?

This is up to the orphanage responsibly for in-taking the child. Our legal staff and social workers review and obtain any additional information they feel is important. No family has asked to do an investigation at this stage but it would probably not be allowed as there should be no contact between the adoptive family and the bio family except through the orphanage.

In what way, if any, does your agency assist prospective birth mothers with the relinquishment process? Are prospective birth mothers counseled as to options other than adoption? Do you accept children directly into your care from relinquishing mothers?

AAI is not involved with birth parents. They are referred to orphanages if they make contact. We do not accept children directly from relinquishing relatives.

What percentage of children is available for adoption as a result of relinquishment vs. abandonment?

AAI places many older children and they are usually relinquished by family members. With babies there is a higher percentage of abandonment cases.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE PARENTS

Do you provide medical information, social report, photos and video upon referral? What specific medical tests are run on children being referred (please specify type of test)?

We provide medical, lab reports, social summery and photos. We only provide video if it is an older child or a child with special needs.

HIV antibody and DNA, HepB, Hep C, and complete blood work are a minimum

Do you provide copies of your contract to prospective clients upon request and without charge?

Yes

Does your contract contain any gag clause? If so, why?

No

Do you provide clients with a copy of Ethiopia law pertaining to adoption and adoption agencies?

upon request

CONTACT WITH BIRTH FAMILY

Does your agency have any policy regarding contact between adoptive families and birth families either pre- or post-adoption?

No contact allowed pre-adoption

Contact post adoption is discourage but allowed though the agency. Some families adopting older children maintain contact independently.

When adoptive families travel to Ethiopia to complete the adoption process, are adoptive families and children able to meet birth family?

Yes in most cases

Is birth family contact information shared with adoptive parents?

No

Are adoptive families permitted to independently tape birth family meetings or have an independent translator available?

Yes

FEES AND DONATIONS FOR ADOPTION

Does your agency directly accept tax deductible donations on behalf of a specific adoptive family?

Does your agency partner with or is it affiliated with any organization that accepts tax deductible donations on behalf of a specific adoptive family?

We don not accept donation for specific families but we do accept them for specific hard to place children. Answer to second question is NO.

What fees charged to clients go directly to Ethiopia? How are these fees used in Ethiopia (care centers, orphanage support, etc)?

What we call the Ethiopia fee is used to cover costs there. It is paid in our U.S. office and transferred bank to bank and the Ministry of Justice gets an accounting.

Are adoptive families charged periodic fees for maintenance for the child?

No

Do you advise prospective adoptive families about tipping individuals in Ethiopia such as nannies and lawyers? If so, what do you advise?

They are asked not to tip or to bring gifts for the staff. If they wish they may contribute to a fund for an annual party or outing for the staff.

HUMANITARIAN AID

What humanitarian projects does your agency participate in? Are these programs run through a separate organization or managed directly by your agency?

We build a school for 1200 children in Dessie. We have a feeding program for orphan children who are generally too old to be adopted. We have about 500 orphan children in sponsorship who can live with extended families or friends and remain in Ethiopia as long as they are in school. We have a home for physically and mentally disabled orphan children.

How much money does your agency dedicate to humanitarian aid in Ethiopia per year?

I don't have a number but we consider this a very important part of who we are as an agency.

How are your adoption and child service projects publicized in rural areas?

I believe this is done through local welfare departments and orphanages.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Is there any other information your agency wishes to share about its programs in Ethiopia?

AAI is committed to serving whatever children are brought to our attention as being in need of permanent families. This often includes older children, large sibling groups and children with disabilities. We have pioneered the effort to place HIV+ children for adoption and have placed nearly 100 HIV+ children with American parents, primarily from Ethiopia but from other countries as well.

We are committed to processing adoptions in an ethical manner, following the laws and preferences of Ethiopia with the hope that adoption will continue to be an option for orphan Ethiopia children.