

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

22 CFR Part 96

[Public Notice 4466]

RIN 1400-AA-88

Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption; Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000; Accreditation of Agencies; Approval of Persons; Preservation of Convention Records

AGENCY: Department of State.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of State (the Department) is proposing regulations to implement the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (the Convention) and the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000 (the IAA). The Convention and the IAA require that adoption service providers be accredited or approved to provide adoption services for intercountry adoptions involving two countries party to the Convention. These proposed rules establish procedures that the Department will use to designate accrediting entities for the purpose of evaluating agencies and persons and determining if they may be granted accreditation or approval. These proposed rules also contain procedures and standards to accredit agencies and approve persons to provide adoption services in Convention cases. These rules will ensure that, when the Convention enters into force for the United States, there will be accredited agencies and approved persons to provide adoption services for Convention adoptions.

DATES: Comments must reach the Department on or before November 14, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Commenters may send hard copy submissions or comments in electronic format. Commenters sending only hard copies must send an original and two copies referencing docket number State/AR-01/96 to: U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/PRI, Adoption Regulations Docket Room, SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20520. Hard copy comments may also be sent by overnight courier services to: U.S. Department of State, CA/OCS/PRI, Adoption Regulations Docket Room, 2201 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20520. Do not personally hand deliver comments to the Department of State.

Comments referencing the docket number State/AR-01/96 may be submitted electronically to adoptionregs@state.gov. Two hard

copies of the comments submitted electronically must be mailed under separate cover as well. The electronic comments or the hard copy comments must be received by the date noted above in the date section of this proposed rule. Comments must be made in the text of the message or submitted as a Word file avoiding the use of any form of encryption or use of special characters. If you submit comments by hard copy rather than electronically, include a disk with the submission if possible. Hard copy submissions without an accompanying disk file, however, will be accepted.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Edward Betancourt or Anna Mary Coburn at 202-647-2826 or Jessica Rosenbaum at 202-312-9717. Hearing- or speech-impaired persons may use the Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDD) by contacting the Federal Information Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: As noted, comments may be submitted electronically to:

adoptionregs@state.gov. Public comments and supporting materials are available for viewing at the Adoption Regulations Docket Room. To review docket materials, members of the public must make an appointment by calling Delilia Gibson-Martin at 202-647-2826. The public may copy a maximum of 100 pages at no charge. Additional copies cost \$0.25 a page.

The Department of State will keep the official record for this action in paper form. Accordingly, the official administrative file is the paper file maintained at the Adoption Regulations Docket Room, United States Department of State. The Department of State's responses to public comments, whether the comments are received in written or electronic format, will be published in the **Federal Register**, and no immediate responses will be provided. General information about intercountry adoptions is available on the Department of State's Web site at <http://travel.state.gov/adopt.html> and the Department of Homeland Security Web site at <http://www.immigration.gov>. Background information about the development of these regulations is provided at <http://www.hagueregs.org>.

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I. Legal Authority

The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, May 29, 1993,