

American Attitudes Exposed

Russian Re-accreditation Reveals Delinquent Post-Placement Report Problem

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A new law passed in Russia has brought adoptions through accredited American adoption agencies to a standstill. The situation arose when all present agency accreditations were allowed to expire. The new law simply calls for every American adoption agency working in Russia to be re-accredited through the Ministry of Education before they can resume adoptions.

However, the new law stipulates that in addition to the Ministry of Education, an agency's application must be reviewed and presumably

shut down of adoptions in the country. They note that adoptions have not stopped and that adoption facilitators based in other countries such as Italy are still completing adoptions as are so-called "private adoptions" in which individuals make their own arrangements and application — an often risky venture without a high level of knowledge about the Russian system.

As of mid-May, no U.S. agency had yet received accreditation although virtually all report they have filed all the papers and expect their accreditation any day now. Others are

the relationship between the American and Russian governments after years of post-cold war cooperation.

Others say there is a growing nationalistic attitude in Russia that has grown uncomfortable with the number of children being adopted into America while others say this is just the latest twist in the roller coaster ride of Russian adoptions that has been going on for years.

Still others say a few high-profile reports of adopted Russian children suffering abuse at the hands of American adoptive parents was a primary driver. However, one issue just about everyone who spoke with Adoption Today agrees on is the ongoing problem of delinquent post-placement reports.

A Uniquely American Problem?

Americans adopting abroad have dominated intercountry adoption for several years and are often portrayed as generous, big-hearted and compassionate for their willingness to act with their feet in doing something about one of the worst scourges of our times.

The growing American acceptance of adoption as a legitimate way to build a family is often admired overseas and there are many parents who have faced the quizzical look from locals in a foreign country as they have tried to answer the question "But why would you adopt an orphan from our country?" while at the same time being told what they are doing is a good thing for the child.

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approved, by the Ministries of Justice, Health, Foreign Affairs and Interior. Once approved an agency will receive a perpetual accreditation that has no expiration date unless the Russian government finds reason to revoke or suspend the license. This replaces the system in which agencies were required to seek re-accreditation on an annual basis.

The Russian government is quick to point out that this is a temporary situation while the re-accreditations are completed and is not a

not as positive saying the Russians have added requirements as the re-accreditation has gone along and note there is no promise of when adoptions will resume.

Why the New Law?

Exploring the reason for the new law and why the Russian government did not try to overlap expiring agency accreditation with new ones is a difficult exercise. Some will site the current volatility of the political environment in Russia or the growing frostiness in

Yet many foreign “sending” countries struggle with a competing sense of nationalistic pride that wants to keep the children home rather than realize the size of a growing orphan population and the desire to see every child have a home and a family to call their own.

Understandably, most countries that participate in intercountry adoption require some kind of post-placement report usually for a period of a few months up to a couple of years for some countries. The reports often provide proof that the country has done what is right by the child and in some cases are what allows the system to continue. And this is where a dark side of American culture can rear its head and ironically hurt or end the prospects of other children being adopted in the future.

Adoption Today spoke with several groups in the adoption community from national umbrella organizations to adoption agencies to adoptive parents. While Americans can be so compassionate in adopting children, once they are home many speak of a change of attitude that reflects the American sense of freedom and individual rights. Several in the field suggested to Adoption Today that new laws in Russia have as much to do with the problem of delinquent post-placement reports as anything else.

One described it as, “The arrogant American attitude that no government agency is going to tell me how to raise my children.” Another put it even more bluntly, “Yes, there will be no government agency that will come and take your child away (for not filing a post-placement report), but you will be responsible for causing many other children to lose their chance of being adopted.”

Yet another said, “It’s almost a cavalier attitude, that I’m an American and no foreign country is going to tell me what to do.”

Indeed this is not the first time this American attitude toward post-placement reports has caused a problem. Adoptions in Kazakhstan

have been stalled at least twice in recent years while agencies were required to catch-up on delinquent post-placement reports.

And Ukraine just started accepting dossiers again after halting adoptions over a number of issues with delinquent post-placement reports as a primary factor. One adoption official lamented that for some countries sitting on

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Few blame agencies for not trying to make parents comply, but there is little they can do with a stubborn parent who refuses to comply. Some agencies who spoke with Adoption Today say at times the problem has been so widespread that as many as 15 percent to 25 percent of families were either delinquent or nearing delinquency. Another official told Adoption Today there are “hundreds” of delinquent post-placement reports owed to Russia alone.

For their part, some agencies say that the Russian requirements for post-placement reports leave such small windows when the family can file the report that it is difficult to coordinate social worker and parents’ schedules, get the reports certified by the state and then filed with the Russian government within the window. Other agencies told Adoption Today of having their post-placement reports filed but because of bureaucracy in Russia certain regions were unaware the reports were filed and still reported the agency as having delinquent reports.

Agencies Try to Build in Compliance

Several agencies working in Russia today told Adoption Today they have adjusted and try to build in compliance with post-placement reports up front. Often the agreement to file post-placement reports is written into the contract between parents and the agency and many agencies charge for the post-placement reports at the outset, usually equalling several

thousand dollars, and gradually pay back the money to the adoptive family as they file the reports.

But even with this incentive one agency told Adoption Today they have some families that just don’t care about the money and refuse to comply. Still other agencies say they have sometimes had to pay for the post-placement reports out of their own pocket to guarantee compliance.

One member of a national adoption organization perhaps summed up the issue best, “We have not done a good job of making adoptive parents understand the seriousness of failing to comply with the requirements for post placement reports. There is no sense that complying with this requirement is doing what is right by the child. As Americans we are not used to this kind government oversight into our families. So while it may be understandable on one level, it is not acceptable. This is not a suggestion but a requirement.”

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