*Office of Communications*

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

# USCIS Update

August 6, 2007

## USCIS HIGHLIGHTS CHANGE TO GUATEMALAN INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTIONS

WASHINGTON – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) today announced that the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala will now require results of a second DNA test from the biological parent before they will issue an immigrant visa for the adopted child.

The additional test is in response to concerns about the unregulated adoption process in Guatemala. The results must verify that the adopted child is the same child matched at the beginning of the adoption process with the biological parent.

USCIS already requires one DNA match between a relinquishing parent and a prospective adoptive child as part of the adjudication of the *Petition to Classify an Orphan as an Immediate Relative* (Form I-600). The Department of State Consular Immigrant Section will now require the second DNA test results before issuing an immigrant visa.

USCIS will continue its current process for adjudicating orphan petitions. It will support the Consular Section with this new requirement by notifying prospective adoptive parents, or their representatives, of this new Department of State requirement when USCIS issues a decision approving an orphan petition.

This new procedure will apply to relinquishment adoption petitions for which final documents are submitted to the Embassy on or after August 6. It will not apply to cases in which the final adoption documents have already been submitted to USCIS Guatemala or to abandonment cases. The Consular Section will issue a "pink slip" or visa interview appointment when it receives the second DNA test result.

USCIS supports the highest standards of practice in intercountry adoption. Due to concerns about the Guatemalan adoption process, the United States government must apply an extraordinary level of scrutiny to adoption cases there.

USCIS supports the efforts of the government of Guatemala to reform its adoption process to meet its obligations as a party to the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, signed at The Hague on May 29, 1993. The Hague Permanent Bureau's international advisory group of experts, including U.S. representatives, are providing technical assistance to the government of Guatemala as it works toward implementation of an intercountry adoption process that fully implements the principles of the Convention.

Additional information on the intercountry adoptions process in Guatemala is available on the Department of State web site: www.travel.state.gov.

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