

ETHICA'S ETHIOPIA TRANSPARENCY SURVEY

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

Response from Wide Horizons for Children

Agency Name Wide Horizons For Children

Website <http://www.whfc.org>

GENERAL QUESTIONS

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

We have conducted extensive trainings and provided protocols for our staff as well as government child welfare officials. We have additional steps in place to verify accuracy of information received on children after the child is assigned to WHFC from the orphanage for placement.

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

We've been continually licensed since 2003.

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

No. We accept families into our program from approved partner agencies across the US. All WHFC families are Hague approved, even if they are not adopting from a Hague convention country.

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

142, 208, 173, 198 respectively

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

+/- 150

STAFF IN ETHIOPIA

What is the address of your agency's office?

WHFC's main office is located in Addis Ababa, with Humanitarian Aid offices established in SNNPR and Tigray regions. All pertinent office and staff contact information is provided to families prior to travel.

What are the names of your in country representatives?

Dr. Tsegaye Berhe, WHFC Director of Africa Programs

WHFC has a staff of approximately 60 in country.

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.

Yes. WHFC Ethiopia is a branch of WHFC USA.

What are the names of your agency's care centers/transitional homes? In what areas of the country are they located?

WHFC runs two transitional homes, Horizon House I and Horizon House II, in Addis Ababa.

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.

Children are only cared for at Horizon House I and II after their adoption case has been approved by the Federal Court. They remain in care 1-2 months until their families are invited to travel. The homes are staffed by trained care givers and supervisory nurses 24/7. The number of care givers depends on the number of children in care, which is typically 10-30 children at one time.

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.

The main office, located in Addis Ababa, manages all WHFC's Humanitarian Aid and Adoption work in the country. There are also two offices located in the SNNPR and Tigray regions whose primary focus is to oversee Humanitarian Aid projects in their regions. Their work is supervised by the head office in Addis.

Do you use freelance social workers or recruiters in Ethiopia?

no

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

Rwanda, opened in 2009
Burundi, opening in 2010
DRC, under development

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.

WHFC has no exclusive contracts with any orphanage in Ethiopia. Depending on the needs of the children, we typically have official working relationships with 5-8 orphanages throughout the country at any given time. Donations of humanitarian aid to orphanages are considered, approved and funded on a project proposal basis, not on a per adoption case basis. WHFC's Humanitarian Aid department is separately managed and staffed from the adoption department.

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

N/A

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?

As a placing agency, we have no legal authority to intervene in orphanage operations. We do offer collaborations on trainings in child care, access to medical care and we stop working with orphanages if/when we feel they are not accountable for their operations and ethical practices.

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

After completion and approval of Federal Court process. On occasion we have sought specific permission to care for very compromised children at risk of death in our care center in Addis, as we are able to seek better medical treatment for them in Addis when needed.

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?

Under Ethiopian law, it is the sole responsibility of local, regional and federal child welfare authorities and licensed orphanage officials to assess and investigate eligibility for adoption. Once a child from an orphanage is referred to WHFC for placement, our staff who are trained in ethics in adoption, re-interview birth families (if applicable) to verify accuracy of child information and ensure that the birth families are informed of their rights and responsibilities in the adoption process.

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?

WHFC does not assist in the relinquishment process, nor do we accept children into care from a relinquishing mother. WHFC informs birth families of their rights and responsibilities in the adoption process only after the child has been assigned to WHFC for placement from the orphanage. Rights and responsibilities include education on the permanency of ICA and their right to reclaim a child prior to the finalization of the adoption.

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

Approximately 90/10 - relinquishment/abandonment

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE PARENTS

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

Adoptive families receive written child background report, medical report with lab testing, photos - no video

Lab results for HIV, Hepatitis B and C

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?

There is no gag clause related to experience with WHFC. However, parents must agree not to publicly share information on a referred child until the adoption is finalized and they are the sole legal parents.

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

Available 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?

Yes. Adoptive / Birth families are completely prohibited for having any contact pre-adoption. Post-adoption monitored visits, when possible, are encouraged by our agency, as we believe they are in the best interest of the child. This visit is conducted under strict supervision by WHFC in-country staff, and can only occur with the agreement of the birth family and adoptive family. Extensive preparation is provided to all parties.

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

yes, when applicable. See above.

Is birth family contact information shared with adoptive parents?

No. In referral information, adoptive families are provided birth family composition, including names, ages, general town or area, if applicable.

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

Yes, taping of the meeting is possible if permission is granted by the birth family.

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?

Donations from adoptive families are only accepted post adoption, and may not be specifically designated except to a particular pre-approved humanitarian aid project or country program.

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

All adoption service fees are paid to WHFC USA. WHFC USA oversees the budget for WHFC Ethiopia, which is approved on a fiscal year basis not on a per placement basis. The only additional fees adoptive parents incur in-country are costs for transportation for the birth family visit and accommodation in the region, if applicable.

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

No, except in the rare case when an adoptive family refuses to travel on the date designated by WHFC to receive their adopted child.

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

WHFC specifically advises families that tipping is not obligatory.

HUMANITARIAN AID

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

WHFC's Humanitarian Aid projects in Ethiopia focus primarily on community development of medical and educational services and family empowerment and sustainability. Humanitarian projects are administered by WHFC, but managed and staffed by an entirely separate department from the adoption services department.

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

Since 2003, WHFC has provided approximately \$1.5 million to aid initiatives in Ethiopia.

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

They are not publicized. We work through regional governments and community leaders to assess needs. Projects are reported to the Federal Government annually with our agency licensing report.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

N/A