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Important News From China

The Big Iodine Scare

Recently the New York Times ran an article suggesting that infants in China suffered from iodine deficiencies. These deficiencies could lead to thyroid problems, and have an impact on intelligence. In extreme cases it could even cause cretinism. As is often the case with sensationalized articles, the problem was overstated. Dr. Jerri Jenista of the University of Minnesota International Adoption Clinic has debunked the article.

This was a serious problem in the past when transportation in China was poor and iodine rich foods (such as shellfish and other saltwater fish) were not shipped inland regularly. With improvements in transportation and dissemination of nutritional information, it is only a concern in relatively isolated areas. It is just another, relatively rare, vitamin/mineral deficiency that can affect children. No infants adopted from China are known to have a serious iodine deficiency.

While the health of children under state care in developing nations is always a concern, the children being adopted from China continue to have excellent health by international adoption standards. We would also note that infants in state care are fed formula, which is iodine fortified. Anecdotally, we have spoken with several former residents of Sichuan Province (this is the province from which most of our families choose to adopt). They were aware that in the 1950's the government told everyone about the importance of iodine in the diet. Seaweed, an excellent natural source of iodine, became a staple in soups and other meals, and the salt in local stores was iodized. In short, much ado about nothing.

China Center of Adoption Affairs Consolidates

For the past several years, two Ministries have had separate but equal control over the adoption process. They were the Ministry of Justice which controls the issuance of passports in China (your child needs one to leave the country), and the Ministry of Civil Affairs which runs the Social Welfare Centers (orphanages). In the past there has been quite a bit of tension between the two ministries, which has resulted in processing delays for some families.

Recently the central government decided that the Ministry of Civil Affairs would have final say over adoption matters. A new director, Mr. Guo Sijin has been named. These changes should result in faster processing times, and more consistency in requirements for adoptive parents. There may also be some policy and procedure changes in the future. We will inform you of the changes as they occur. **Americans Adopting Orphans** has been sending applications to the Ministry of Civil Affairs for the last several months. We have established a good relationship with the officials there.

Five of Our Families Return from China while Others Prepare to Travel

Congratulations to the five families who just returned from China. Just 10 days were spent processing the adoptions in China. All of their babies were healthy and happy. Just last week we received several more referrals from the China Center of Adoption Affairs. All of these families

were assigned healthy children from Sichuan Province. Families who wish to use our **Step 5 Adoption Assistance within China** will glad to hear that we continue to receive referrals from the cities our families request.

Processing Times for Applications Remain Slow

In our correspondence with the China Center of Adoption Affairs, it is clear that they are being swamped with applications. The growing popularity of adoption from China coupled with internal re-organizations have created somewhat of a backlog. We are very hopeful that the consolidation of adoption authority with a single ministry, combined with increases to China Center of Adoption Affairs staffing levels will expedite their procedures.

For those of you who are watching the clock - we estimate that time from application to assignment of a child is currently two to four months, and from that referral to travel at two to three months. It is VERY important, however, to remember that applications are not always processed in China on a First In - First Out basis. You can't judge your progress by the progress of other families. Remember, you hear more from people who have completed their processing, not people who are still waiting, possibly longer than you. Having other families reach a milestone before you does NOT mean that there is anything wrong with your application, just that they were lucky.

News from Americans Adopting Orphans

Translation of Dossiers Resumes

For the past several months we have been sending un-translated dossiers to China, at the request of the China Center of Adoption Affairs. Recently we have been told that there is no preference whether or not dossiers are translated. It is our opinion that documents will be translated more quickly and accurately if done in the United States, possibly saving as much as a month of total processing time in China. Further, we believe that having documents go through an additional processing step in China adds to the chances that the dossier will be mislaid. Finally, we understand that the China Center of Adoption Affairs is expanding. New employees always mean a higher risk of errors, particularly with regard to translating idiomatic American English. We don't want a simple translation error to jeopardize your adoption. We have two different levels of translation services available to our clients, or you can provide your own. See the latest update of our Description of Services (dated July 1996) for details.

New Frequently Asked Questions and Description of Services are Available

The Frequently Asked Questions has been expanded and updated. Please let us know if you would like a copy.

The Description of Services has also been updated. We have included information about translation services available to clients, and the impact this has had on Step 2 fees. Full Service Step 2 clients now have the option of having a full spare dossier assembled, should the original be lost.

Due to recent additions and technical changes in document requirements from the China Center of Adoption Affairs, dossiers are becoming more complex requiring more time and expertise complete. For this reason, the fee for each Step 1 service is increased by \$200.

We have enhanced our breakdown of fees, and made it easier to understand. The range of the total costs for an adoption for our clients is \$9,000 to \$17,000.

A copy of the new Description of Services has been included for all clients. If you are

considering starting your adoption process we will be happy to send you a copy as well, along with our new application form.

Clarification of Education Center Function

Our Education Center is in the Wu Building at 3212 NE 125th, just East of Lake City Way. It is the place where we teach classes and hold meetings. This is not a new mailing address, or business office. If you are planning to mail something to us, please continue to use the address on Lake City Way on our letterhead. This is a post office-like service that is always available to securely accept mail and packages. If you would like to meet with us, we still ask that you call for an appointment. Watch your mail for the announcement of our fall curriculum of classes and seminars that will be offered at the Education Center. Your suggestions for topics have been very helpful, and you will be excited to see that our first schedule reflects the needs you have expressed.

News from the Internet

Americans Adopting Orphans Policy Supported

It has always been our understanding that the INS form 171-H needs to be legalized. This is the form from the US Government that gives a family permission to adopt a child internationally. In the past month several other agencies have agreed with our position, and are now asking their clients to have these forms legalized.

Rumors of Parental Age Importance Persist

We have been hearing persistent rumors that families under 35 years of age, or who already have children, will be asked to adopt children with minor special needs, and families over 45 years of age may be asked to adopt older children. While this has always been a possibility, almost all families in the past have received assignments of healthy infants. We will keep an eye on reported assignments of children in the coming months. We remind families that Chinese adoption regulations are subject to interpretation by the China Center of Adoption Affairs. At any time, Center officials can begin asking affected families to adopt older or special needs children.

Announcements of Referrals Become More Common

General observation of what individual families have reported on the net suggest that the China Center of Adoption Affairs made quite a few referrals in the second quarter of '96, but travel dates for these referrals were slow in coming. There was some speculation that this was due to the friction between the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the Ministry of Justice. After the centralization of the Center, travel dates began pouring out in July (we received several), however referrals slowed during that time. It now appears that referrals are picking up again. We are hoping that families who have been waiting for referrals will soon get their assignments, and that travel dates will be forthcoming as well.

*****Please Note*****

We ask that you do not share this information with public outlets on the internet, including adoptive parents e-mail lists, news groups, and chat groups on private internet providers like AOL and Prodigy. It is the policy of **Americans Adopting Orphans** to provide real *news* in our newsletters. China is VERY sensitive to publicity, and is known to have internet access. An innocent public remark from one of our readers might be interpreted as a criticism of the China

Center of Adoption Affairs.

Please do not place the adoptions of many families at risk. We want to continue offering this level of information to our readers and feel that it is our obligation to be responsible in passing along news about adoption in China. We strongly encourage you to be responsible too. There are too many families and children depending on it. Also, this newsletter is a Copyrighted document, and may not be publicly quoted without our specific written permission.

August Calendar of Events

- On **Saturday, August 24th** the Northwest China Council presents a seminar from 1 - 4 PM on "Americans Adopting Babies From China, Process and Cultural Issues." at Portland State University in Room 127 of Shattuck Hall. Admission is \$15 per individual and \$25 per couple. **Americans Adopting Orphans** will have an informational display at the seminar. We will be having dinner at the restaurant in the nearby Days Inn afterward, and would love spend some time with anyone in the neighborhood. The phone number for the Northwest China Council is area code 503-725-4567.
- Our next General Orientation meeting will be **Sunday, August 18th**. If we haven't met, this is the meeting for you. We'll talk about the basics of adoption from China, explain how our uniquely flexible program lets you design your adoption plan, and show a video of an adoption in China, including a trip through an orphanage. Our doors will open at 2:30 and the 2-hour program will start promptly at 3:00. The meeting will be held at our Education Center in the Wu Building at 3212 NE 125th, just a half a block East of Lake City Way.
- On **Sunday, August 25th**, we will be holding our regular "Adoption from China" Support Group meeting. The doors open for clients at 2PM and for the general public at 3PM. Children are welcome. At this month's meeting we will be talking about "The Chinese Way". We'll discuss the cultural differences between Eastern and Western thought, and how they can affect the processing of adoption paperwork. We have invited guest speakers who have spent a lot of time in China. This meeting will also take place at our Education Center.
- You will want to tune into 94.5 FM KUOW on **Tuesday, August 27th** from 10 - 11 AM to hear the call-in program, "Weekday with Marcy Sillman." The topic will be adoption and will feature Ann Lawrence, MA, a Clinical Psychologist who performs many home studies for **Americans Adopting Orphans** client families. Your questions and comments are invited. Call in and show your support and enthusiasm for adoption!

New in September

- We will be adding a new meeting at the Education Center, the Waiting Family Tea Time. This meeting will be open to **Americans Adopting Orphans** client families who have sent their applications to China, and are waiting for either the assignment of a child, or permission to travel to China. It will take place on the second Sunday of each month from 3 to 5 PM. The first meeting will be on **Sunday, September 8th**.
- Also in September our General Orientation meeting will be on **Sunday September 15th** from 3 to 5 PM, and our monthly Support Group meeting will be on **Sunday, September 22nd** at 2 PM for clients and 3 PM for the General Public.