

Hague Convention Definitions

Signing: By signing the Convention, a country expresses its intent to ratify the Convention, but is not obligated to do so. Only countries that participated in the 1993 meetings at The Hague that finalized the Convention are eligible to sign the Convention.

Ratification: With ratification, a country takes on the legal obligation to apply the Convention and abide by its provisions. Only countries that participated in the 1993 meetings at The Hague that finalized the Convention are eligible to ratify the Convention.

Accession: Countries that are not eligible to ratify the Convention may still become party to it by acceding to the Convention. With accession, the countries that are already party to the Convention have the opportunity to oppose the accession of other countries. For the adoption convention, the Convention will come into force for an acceding country and all countries party to the Convention that do not object within six months. To date, there have been no objections to accession by any country, and none are expected in the future.

Goes into force: the Convention goes into force on the first day of the month following the expiration of three months after a country has deposited of its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval, or accession with the Hague Conference on Private International Law. Although the U.S. has ratified the adoption convention, it will not deposit its instrument of ratification until the appropriate bodies and procedures have been established and it is ready to fully implement the convention.

Hague adoption: An adoption involving children and prospective parents habitually resident in different countries, each of which has approved the Convention and come under its provisions.

Central Authority: The Central Authority is the governmental body that is responsible for implementing the Convention. It may delegate many of its duties to other authorities, as provided for by the convention. For the U.S., the Department of State will provide the Central Authority, to be located in the Office of Children's Issues. The U.S. Central Authority is expected to delegate many of its responsibilities concerning specific adoption cases to accredited bodies or approved persons (for example, preparing home studies, educating parents, and referring specific children for adoption).

Accredited bodies: In the U.S., these will be not-for-profit adoption agencies that have been evaluated as to their expertise, financial accountability, and ethical procedures and then "accredited" to provide adoption services in Hague adoptions.

Approved persons: In the U.S., these will be individual adoption service providers (e.g. attorneys, social workers) and for-profit adoption agencies that have been evaluated as to their expertise, financial accountability, and ethical procedures and then "approved" to provide adoption services in Hague adoptions.

Accrediting body: An organization delegated by the Central Authority to evaluate and recommend agencies and persons for accreditation or approval.