

Thank you for choosing me to provide your home study. I have 21 years of experience in domestic and international adoptions and have completed many home studies over two decades. I hope our time together is productive, fun, and educational. Please take the time to carefully read the following. Once you have read it, please initial each paragraph to demonstrate your understanding and agreement. Please feel free to ask many any questions that you may have.

1. Purpose of the home study: All states and countries abroad require that clients have a home study completed and approved by a licensed child placing agency. The purpose of the home study is to demonstrate, as a result of interviews and the gathering of relevant documentation, that the prospective adoptive parents can provide an adequate home for a child and that there are no current or past issues that are likely to impair the couple's ability to do so. When you pay for a home study, you are paying for my professional expertise and opinion. No one is perfect, and almost everyone has had difficult or unpleasant circumstances in their past. I will simply ask you to provide documentation of resolution of any past problems.

2. Documents: You will be asked to provide specific documents to complete your home study. I must receive them to be able to write the narrative. The quicker I receive them, the quicker I can complete your home study. They may be Xeroxed copies and do not need to be notarized. It is helpful to me if they are turned in as a packet rather than piece meal.

3. Reference Letters: Please have reference letters sent directly to me. Reference letters are confidential and cannot be released by me. If you wish to have a copy of your reference letters, please ask for them from the author. I will need five letters, two from relatives and three from non relatives. These letters should comment on your positive attributes as potential parents, explain how the author knows you and your spouse, how long they have known you, give the author's opinion of your ability to love an adopted child as well as one born to you, stability of your marriage and finances, comment on your ability to contend with specific issues, such as an older child or a child of a difference race, etc

4. Cost: My fees for home studies fall within the moderate range. Fees are based on the cost to this agency of carrying malpractice insurance, participating in continuing education, office overhead, meeting increasingly onerous state and international requirements, and allowing me to provide sufficient time to you to complete a comprehensive, thorough, responsible study as opposed to the "drive through" approach. Once we begin the home study process together (our initial appointment), there will be no refunds given.

5. Truthfulness and personal integrity: I wish to be as transparent and candid as possible with my clients. I strive to treat them with dignity and respect, and I request they do the same with me. The home study process can feel intrusive and overwhelming at times. Clients sometimes struggle with feelings of frustration and anger as those parents who give birth to children do not have to go through any process at all! Historically, the state has believed that it has an inherent interest in helping children whose parents cannot care for them be placed in stable families. The home study worker assumes a heavy burden, both legally and morally, when they approve a home study. Both the Court and the state hold us responsible for our work. They set the parameters for what must be

included in a home study. As a veteran provider, I am aware of some tragic cases where children have been placed in seriously deficient families. I have taken the position of erring on the side of the child. These are rare situations, but they do occur more frequently than you may think. Please be aware that falsification of information, omitting pertinent information or untruthful response to questions is cause for immediately ending the home study process and my withdrawal as your worker.

6. Medical: A medical doctor must be able to state that you are in good health, have no chronic or contagious disease that would significantly shorten your lifespan or impair your ability to raise a child. Psychiatric treatment and/or “counseling” must be fully documented by the clinician that treated you and they must be able to make the statement that your condition is now resolved and will not have negative impact on your ability to act as a parent. If you have seen medical specialists, letters and physicals must be received from them as well as your primary physician.

7. Education; Part of the home study is the opportunity for me to provide you with books, articles, internet sources and parent groups that can help you. I will ask you to study and prepare yourself to successfully face some of the unique challenges that adoptive parenthood may bring. I want to share my many years of experience with you. I make special efforts to keep abreast of current information and research on adoption related issues. This is particularly crucial with transracial placements, older children and/or children who may be placed with you from abroad who have spent part of their life in institutional care.

8. Updates: Home studies must be updated within one year of placement of a child in your home. Some states require updates to occur within six months. Some agencies may require that you always keep your home study current to remain on their “active” waiting list. Though “nothing has changed”, we are still required to document extensively that “nothing has changed” Once one year has passed, Tennessee requires that all new documentation be submitted to me as well.

9. Consultation and Phone calls: I am happy to consult with you on questions, concerns and dilemmas that may arise during the adoption process. Please remember to direct legal question to your lawyer! Phone consultations over and beyond questions about the home study are treated the same as office appointments and are charged at the rate of \$90.00 per hour. I have a “home office” so try to call during normal business hours. I realize that emergencies arise and will certainly be available to you after hours and on weekends for situations that “just can’t wait”. However, please do reserve those type calls for exactly those type circumstances. You may also email me at ESRardin@aol.com.

10. International studies: The immigration bureau (BCIS) and the foreign country mandate very specific wording and contents of the home study narrative. Unfortunately, BCIS can occasionally be unpredictable regarding their acceptance of a home study. This is a national problem. Generally, I respond to them as quickly as possible and amend the study per their instructions. This typically solves the perceived problem.

While I work hard to educate myself and be sensitive to cultural differences, I cannot write one copy for BCIS and another for the country of origin. This request usually occurs when sensitive medical, psychiatric history exists or prior criminal convictions exist. I believe the practice of providing two different studies is questionable and potentially fraught with pitfalls!

11. **Ownership:** The home study narrative is the work and possession of the author. I will be happy to promptly mail out copies of your study and relevant documents upon request. I will keep your study on file so that when the need arises, it can be sent to the requested person or agency.

12. **Finally:** Now that you have made your way through this document, I look forward to helping you welcome your new addition and creating your family through adoption!