

Home studies put adoptive children into best possible homes

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With about 60 per cent of the home studies for adoption that she performs being connected with international adoptions, Sandra Webb was eager to attend an international conference in Moscow earlier this month.

From December 1 to 15, the Cobourg social worker was at a conference called The Model For Practice For Work of a Local Authority for Child Protection and Family Placement. During that time, Mrs. Webb also witnessed the actual adoption of a boy from an orphanage in the Avanova region by a Quebec couple.

Once a home study for a would-be adoptive family is approved by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, says Mrs. Webb, the match can be made.

But if she had one piece of advice to give to these families it would be to urge them to choose a good agency which knows how to select a healthy child, which has connections with good orphanages and doctors, and which

knows the legal system thoroughly.

"One of the things suggested to families who are adopting internationally is that they have an independent medical (examination) done," says Mrs. Webb, recalling her meeting with a Canadian doctor who had done such work for five years in the Samara region.

Things worked out well for the Quebec couple, who are now the parents of a pudgy, healthy three-year-old boy.

While witnessing the adoption, Mrs. Webb had the chance to go with the couple to court and to interview the judge later.

"They read the home studies and all the information very thoroughly and pick up on little things," she says.

"The judge said they would rather not have common-law partners because it just causes too many questions for them.

"They are so concerned about the fact that many families adopt from Russia and there are supposed to be follow-up reports, but these aren't being done."



Webb: international adoptions

For domestic adoptions, she says, there is a supervi-

sion period afterward of six months. In international

adoptions, the requirement varies with the country.

One reason international adoptions are so popular, Mrs. Webb says, is that it takes so long to adopt in Canada.

"The waiting list varies up to seven years, depending on what area you are in," she estimates.

There is a lot of controversy in Russia about international adoptions, she says. Some people consider it an embarrassment that the children are adopted internationally.

There is also controversy in Canada, she adds.

"There are concerns that families don't understand the seriousness, the complexities of adopting from another country," she says.

Other concerns include a lack of information on a child's heredity, especially since children with medical conditions and birth defects are the ones more likely to be abandoned.

"They were talking about the importance of taking a social history right when the child comes into care," she recalled of the conference.

"If they don't, the parent may disappear.

"Hopefully, they will start to do things like that. But right now, people drop off their children and may not come back."

Should a family inadvertently get a special-needs child, says Mrs. Webb, the government is concerned that they can't cope.

"As part of the home-study process, the ministry really emphasizes that we discuss with families the risks, the medical implications, the support systems that might be necessary. Some of those aren't paid for by our medical system.

"We do have some (internationally adopted) children who end up in our foster-care system.

"The sad thing is, there are so many families wanting children."

Mrs. Webb is fascinated by the snap nature of international adoptions. Domestically, the long process permits the exchange of pictures and information as well as preliminary visits, which she considers to be very important.