

*Journeys of the Heart's*

# MARSHALL ISLANDS program



**The Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI)** has an adoption law that created a Central Adoption Authority (CAA). The

CAA licenses adoption agencies, works with birth parents and their extended families, and matches all adopting parents with available children.

JOH applauds this effort by the RMI to take control of their own adoption processes and children. The new adoption law calls for stricter penalties (jail and fines) for persons or agencies engaged in adoptions of Marshallese children on Hawaiian or other US states' soil. While unethical and illegal adoptions continue, it is clear that the RMI's wishes and laws regarding adoption of her children need to be respected and obeyed.

The new process, which is meant to eliminate any coercion, fraud or profiteering, is straight forward. An expectant mother or mother approaches the CAA and goes through a series of interviews and steps designed to help the CAA assess and determine what outcome is in the best interest of the child. Adoption within the child's extended family or with another Marshallese family are the first choices. If it is determined that international adoption is in the best interest of a specific child, the CAA staff will choose a JOH family to adopt the child.

Referral information will be given, consents signed by the birth mother, and a 30-day wait begins. After all paperwork is completed (approximately 3-4 months) the adopting family will arrive in Majuro to adopt the child, meet the birth family, and apply for the child's orphan visa with the US Embassy.

Both adopting parents must travel. One parent and the adopted child do need to stay in Majuro for approximately 4-6 weeks until the visa is received.

The Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) Program is unique in the world of international adoption. It combines elements of an international adoption with travel to another country and aspects of a domestic adoption where a relationship with the birth mother and her extended family is developed and maintained.

Adopted children benefit from knowing that a birth mother loves and cares about them and by keeping connections to their origins. Journeys of the Heart requires the adopting parents to sign an agreement to send pictures and a letter to the birth mother at least twice a year. This openness between the two families is an incredible gift for the child and one that many internationally adopted children will never receive. This program is for families who can sincerely embrace the idea of an open adoption with their child's birth family. The birth mother and her family generally welcome any contact including visits, phone calls or the required letters.

Adoptions occur from the islands because of poverty, high birth rate, and small land mass. Adoptions through kinship systems have occurred for centuries. JOH has had an international adoption program there since 1998. Infants and older children may become available although most children referred will be infants.

It is important to the Marshallese people and to JOH that the adopting family embraces and celebrates the culture of the child. There are several growing Marshallese communities throughout the US who have been welcoming to the adopted children and their families. Adopting parents living elsewhere will have to work harder to help the child achieve and maintain an ethnic identity.

The health issues of Marshallese children are similar to other international programs. Hepatitis B and sexually transmitted diseases are in the general population. HIV is usually tested for, but occasionally test kits are not available. A medical report is received and birth records are often available. One photo is usually available.

The Marshall Islands were used as a nuclear test site by the United States after World War II. Because of this testing the islands have a higher than average incidence of specific cancers for the people who were alive at the time of the testing. Any family interested in this program should do their own research on this issue.

Married couples can apply to adopt in this program. Single women applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Age and size of family are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Breakdown of Fees for Journeys Republic of Marshall Islands Program Hawaii**

#### ***EXPENSES PAID TO JOURNEYS:***

#### **Adoption Expenses in the U.S**

Journeys Application Fee	\$250
Journeys Coordination and Administration Fee?	\$5,000
Journeys Educational DVD's and material	\$200

### **Home Study**

Completed by Journeys	\$1,000
Completed by another Agency	Varies by Agency
Social Worker mileage, tolls, food and travel expenses	To be billed after home study is completed
Home Study Review (for non-Journeys Home Studies)	\$100

### **2 Post Placement Reports**

**(3 will be required if the child is 18 months or older)**

Completed by Journeys at \$350 each	\$700-\$1,050
Completed by another Agency	Varies by agency

### **The Republic of Marshall Island In-Country Fees**

Attorney costs, RMI Court filing fees, Birth mother expenses, RMI Staff	\$10,000
Charitable Contribution to RMI	\$3,000

### ***THIRD PARTY EXPENSES:***

#### **Legal Fees and Documents**

CIS I600A Application	\$670 *
Fingerprints	\$80 per person *
Child's US Immigrant Visa - CASH	\$380 *
Child's Immigrant Visa photos/medical exam	\$50 **
Finalization of Adoption in your State (varies by state and attorney)	\$1,000 **

#### **Travel Expenses**

Airfare per seat per adult	\$1,000-\$2,000 **
Airfare per child varies by age of child	\$200 - \$1000 **
Hotel, food, taxis and miscellaneous while in country – per adult – per day	\$90-\$100 **

\* these fees are not under JOH control and can change at any time.

\*\* denotes **estimated** amounts only

FEES/EXPENSES CAN CHANGE AT ANY TIME  
Visit [www.journeysoftheheart.net](http://www.journeysoftheheart.net) for updates.  
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