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AUTHENTICATING YOUR DOSSIER

In order to use your dossier documents in another country, they often must be presented as authentic documents. The process that must be completed to prove that the documents are authentic is often called legalization, authentication or apostille. An apostille only applies if the accepting country has ratified the Hague Convention on document authentication (more information below).

DR CONGO CLIENTS: Please note that the requirement of authenticating documents for your dossier ONLY applies to your Power of Attorney form. NO other documents need to be authenticated.

1st Step to Authenticate your documents

All dossier documents must first be notarized or certified. Notarization or Certification happens in the State in which the document originated (if you were married in a different state than you currently live, your marriage certificate will be authenticated by different entity).

Notarized:

If document is signed, then the notary is indicating that they have witnessed the signature to the document.

If you cannot have the signature notarized because the notary was not present when the document was signed or because the document is a unsigned document then please have it notarized as a “true and correct original” or “true and correct copy of the original”. If you have any problems with notarization, please request assistance from your program director.

Certified:

Government documents are not notarized but Certified. These documents would likely include birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce decrees or any Court document.

2nd Step (Does not apply to all States)

In some States (Tennessee and Kentucky) your 2nd Step is certification of the notary at the county level. Please contact your county court clerk or State Secretary of State to determine if this is required (not required in Indiana). If so, you must receive this additional certification prior to the next step.



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3rd Step

Dossier documents are submitted to the Secretary of State. Your program director will indicate whether you are obtaining an Authentication Seal or an Apostille. Both are done by the same office and are dependent upon which country you are sending the dossier. For example, DR Congo is an Authentication Seal while Ukraine is an Apostille. In addition, your Secretary of State will likely ask you the country in which you are adopting to determine which type of legalization for your documents.

Location to get Indiana Authentications Secretary of State Authentications:
Business Services Division
302 W. Washington Street
Room E018
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Please do an internet search for all other State's authentication process and follow their instructions. We suggest using walk-in service at and Secretary of State's (SOS) offices in which it is an option. However, if you are mailing your documents for authentication, please include a cover letter and self-addressed/pre-paid envelope for return of your documents. The cover letter should include your contact information, the number of documents, request for authentication/apostille and the country from which you are adopting.

4th Step (Not required of all countries)

After SOS authentication, you may need to send documents for authentication to your foreign country's Consular/Embassy for a final authentication (never applies for apostilles). Your program director will inform you of additional information, if a Consular/Embassy authentication is needed for your dossier. Remember that the Consular/Embassy in which the document must be authenticated is determined by where the document originated. For example, an Indiana document is authenticated often at a Chicago Consulate. Please contact the Consulate/Embassy prior to sending document to obtain a proper understanding of which documents they will authenticate at that Consulate/Embassy, how much (cost may have changed), when (do you need an appointment) and how long (do they allow mail in, express mail or walk in).

GENERAL INFORMATION

- All documents must be properly legalized and Documents will remain valid for one year. However, some countries will only accept a dossier that is less than 6 months old.
- When you get something notarized have every page of the document stamped or sealed by notary.



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- Once the documents are legalized, they must be translated.
- For all country programs **EXCEPT DR Congo** all dossier documents (EVERY DOCUMENT) must be notarized and then authenticated.
For DR Congo families, this only applies to your Power of Attorney form.

HELPFUL REMINDERS!

- ✓ All names in all documents must match your legal name as it appears in your passport.
- ✓ Your passport must be valid for at least seven months beyond the date that you intend to enter the country.
- ✓ Make copies of the original blank forms that anyone provides during the process before you begin preparing your documents and notarizing the documents. If you make a mistake in preparing a document, start over with a fresh form.
- ✓ All documents must be typed or legibly printed.
- ✓ Please prepare two original dossiers (one to send to the country and one for a backup).
- ✓ After completing your dossier, make 2 photocopies of your complete dossier. These copies are for you and your agency.
- ✓ All documents must be originals, unless otherwise discussed (for your I-600A application you can use copies for all supporting documents except the home study must be an original).
- ✓ Be sure that the notary uses the proper/correct name, county and expiration date on file with their Secretary of State.

If you have any questions about authentication of dossier documents, please contact your program director. We wish you the very best as you finalize your dossier!