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South Africa

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New South African Immigration Law May Affect U.S. Adoptive Families

On May 26, 2014, a new law governing immigration and travel procedures, the Immigration Amendment Act (Act), entered into force in South Africa. For information about how the new law may affect your travel, please carefully review the Department of State's webpage regarding [travelling to South Africa](#). While the majority of the new law's requirements went into effect on May 26, 2014, the Government of South Africa announced on September 16, 2014 that the immigration requirements specific to minors – originally set to go into effect on October 1, 2014 – are postponed until June 2015. The Government of South Africa is reviewing the impact of the new requirements on minors. While this review is ongoing, we strongly encourage you to stay apprised of the latest developments by visiting the South African [Department of Home Affairs' website](#) or by contacting the nearest South African Embassy or Consulate. **The requirements below reflect the May 26, 2014 version of the law and are therefore subject to change.** The Department of State will relay new or revised information as appropriate.

Potential Impact on Adoptive Families Travelling to, from, or through South Africa:

- All children travelling to, from, or through South Africa must travel on a valid passport.
- All children entering or departing South Africa also will be required to travel with his/her original, unabridged, long-form birth certificate in hand. The exact contents of unabridged birth certificates vary among the different jurisdictions that issue birth certificates (countries, states, counties, cities, etc.), but the key distinction between an "abridged" and "unabridged" birth certificate is that an unabridged birth certificate identifies the parents of the child.
- If an adoptive child from South Africa has an existing, unabridged birth certificate that displays his/her name and his/her birth parents' names, adoptive parents must also travel with a copy of the adoption decree, which demonstrates their legal relationship to the child. Adoptive parents should be aware that requests for a *new*, unabridged birth certificate may take the South African Department of Home Affairs several months to complete. More information on other documents that may be required, in addition to the birth certificate, is available on the Department of State's webpage on [travelling to South Africa](#).
- Adoptive parents who are U.S. citizens are not required to apply for a visa in advance to visit South Africa, for stays up to three months. They may receive a visitor's visa upon arrival at a port of entry in South Africa. However, travelers who intend to visit South Africa for more than three months must apply for a visa in advance at the South African Embassy or Consulate in the country where they ordinarily reside or where they hold citizenship. More details on application requirements are available on the Department of State's webpage on [travelling to South Africa](#) and the [South African Embassy](#) to the United States' website.
- Adoptive parents who overstay their visa by up to 30 days may be declared "undesirable" by South African authorities and barred from entering South Africa for a period of 12 months. Travelers who overstay for more than 30 days may be declared undesirable for a period of five years.

Please direct questions related to this notice or a specific adoption from South Africa to the Department of State, Office of Children's Issues. You may reach us by phone at 1-888-407-4747 if you are calling from within

the United States, or at 202-501-4444 if you are calling from outside the United States. You may email us at AdoptionUSCA@state.gov.