

Psychological Evaluation Instructions & Template

Colombia Program

Colombia requires each applicant for adoption to undergo a psychological evaluation as part of the adoption home study process. The purpose of the psychological evaluation is to provide a clinical assessment of the applicant(s) and their preparedness to adopt a child.

Colombia has strict requirements for the Psychological Evaluation. Please provide these instructions and template to your clinician prior to beginning your assessment.

Instructions for Psychologist:

1. Colombia requires the psychological evaluation to be completed by a licensed Psychologist (PhD, PsyD).
2. **Colombia requires the Psychologist to follow the template provided below.** Each section in the template must be included/reported on, however the Psychologist may elaborate as needed.
3. The Psychologist may utilize whatever clinically valid test/s and/or methodologies he/she deems sufficient for the evaluation. Colombia is requiring at least one test that can be cited as informing the psychologist's assessment of the specific personality traits mentioned in the "Personality Traits" section below. The raw or coded test scores/results should also be articulated, in a graph or chart when possible, in the annex of the report. The 16PF and PAI are examples of tests that may meet the personality assessment testing requirement but other valid tools are acceptable as well. Please contact us with any questions before completing testing. **If the psychologist has any concerns about the applicant(s) from interviews, observations and/or testing, provide a thorough discussion in the relevant section/s of the report.** Please be sure to note that the testing and overall assessment was discussed with the family, along with their response, and that the psychologist is available to provide future services if needed.
4. The Psychologist must consider and report on their assessment of how each applicant will perform as a parent.
5. Each prospective parent must complete 2 face-to-face sessions with the Psychologist including a discussion of the findings.
6. Married couples can be combined into one report as long as each applicant is individually assessed.
7. When the report is complete, please send a DRAFT to **Jessica Augsburg** (jessicaa@holtinternational.org) and **Kelsey Parsons** (kelseyp@holtinternational.org).
 - a. We will review the report for Colombia requirements/standards and provide feedback to the Psychologist directly. Please do not finalize until you hear back from the Colombia program with any edits.
 - b. When all edits are complete and the report is finalized, please generate 3 original copies. Each copy must be signed and notarized. **Please include a copy of your psychological license with each original copy.**
 - c. Send an electronic scan of the final notarized report to Kelsey as soon as possible.
 - d. In the mail, send two notarized original copies to the family and one notarized original copy to Holt International:

ATTN: Colombia Program
Holt International
250 Country Club Road
Eugene, OR 97401

Thank you for following these instructions! You can find the **TEMPLATE** for the Colombia Psychological Evaluation on the following pages. If you have any questions please contact Jessica Augsburg (jessica@holtinternational.org).

TEMPLATE FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION – COLOMBIA PROGRAM

PRINT (IN COLOR) ON OFFICE LETTER HEAD

Date of report completion:

Interview Dates (must be 2 separate face-to-face visit dates)

Objective: State your professional recommendation of the applicant(s) for the adoption of a child or adolescent from Colombia based on their psychological suitability.

Methodology: Describe techniques used to collect the information, psychological tests administered, and duration of the assessment. Briefly describe the administered psychological testing, inventories, checklists and/or other instruments used for assessment. Provide name of instrument, author, edition, scope, duration, objective, scales and materials. Please attach results to the report.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE APPLICANTS:

DATA OF APPLICANT 1

Complete Name:

Date & Place of Birth:

Identification Document:

Profession/Occupation:

Name of Employer:

Mobile Phone:

Email:

DATA OF APPLICANT 2

Complete Name:

Date & Place of Birth:

Identification Document:

Profession/Occupation:

Name of Employer:

Mobile Phone:

Email:

Home Address:

PARAMETERS TO ASSESS THE APPLICANT(S):

1) Adoption Process

- a) **Motivation to adopt.** The motivation to adopt and the desire to be a parent, must match the described profile of the child/adolescent. The psychologist must describe their desire for adoption from Colombia specifically as well as their motivation to become adoptive parents. The psychologist must establish that the adoption is not based on inappropriate motivations such as: a child as a solution to shortcomings or issues of the applicant(s); to resolve feelings regarding infertility, loneliness, or sickness; to improve social or family maladjustment; to safeguard their marriage; having social recognition; to provide a sibling to a child in the family; to satisfy philanthropic, humanitarian (pity) or religious reasons; to obtain pensions or improve the family's

economic situation; and any other motivations that interfere with the best interest of the child or adolescents and/or based exclusively on the interests of the applicants.

- b) Journey to parenting through adoption.** Please discuss how the prospective parent(s) reached the decision to adopt, how long it took to come to this decision, who participated in the decision process, and how they have prepared themselves and their family. If there are children in the home, please discuss how the applicant(s) have prepared them. Identify any myths, beliefs, and fears the family has about adoption.
- c) Expectations regarding adoption.** Investigate the applicant(s) thoughts regarding a child joining their family through adoption rather than as a biological child. Please describe the profile of child they are hoping to adopt, such as: gender, age range, health status and behavior. Describe in detail the family's ability to adopt a child or adolescent with special needs and how this would impact the family. If the family is not open to certain special needs, please discuss the reasoning.
- d) History and experience of infertility** (for the cases that apply).
In situations involving a history of fertility issues, please discuss history, identify any medically assisted fertility treatments used, when treatments were stopped and if you feel the applicant(s) are in a good place to focus on the adoption. Please discuss any physical and/or emotional stress experienced, the level of support they received and how they processed their grief. Their grief from infertility cannot be a driving force for the adoption.

2) Adoptive family awareness

- a) Recognition of profile of child available.**
Please discuss if the family is aware that children in Colombia are available for adoption because they have suffered abandonment, abuse or neglect, and that they have likely had multiple placements since entering care.
- b) Attitude towards the history of the child and their biological family.** It is important for the applicant(s) to understand that the biological parents will always have a place in the life of the child and therefore in the adoptive family. While the adoption is closed by law, the biological parents are a part of this child's history and story. The applicant(s) shall demonstrate they understand the circumstances that lead to children being available for adoption in Colombia. Assess the perception, fears and feelings of the applicant(s) toward the biological family; how they will integrate the child's history and memories of their biological family into their identity as an adoptive family, and how they will support the child in his/her search of origin when the child reaches legal age.
- c) Attitude towards adoption plan by support system.** Please discuss if the applicant(s) have shared their plan to adopt with extended family, friends, neighbors and close co-workers. If so, please discuss how those in their support system feel about the adoption plan. If the applicant(s) has not yet shared their plan, please discuss why. If the applicant(s) do not have support from everyone in their support network, please discuss how they plan to manage this going forward while respecting their child's story and pride in his/her adoption story.

3) Psychological characteristics of applicant(s)

- a) Family and personal history related to mental health.**
- b) Personality traits.** Please describe testing done to assess personality traits along with the results / your assessment here. Your observation and assessment of these traits should include the context of the individual's capacity to manage stress,

provide emotional care to an adopted child, seek help when needed, and remain committed to parenting the child are helpful to include. Please discuss each of the traits listed below by name.

- **Altruism:** While indicators of strong altruistic traits can be positive, please ensure that the applicant(s) are not adopting as a humanitarian act. It cannot be the sole motivation to adopt a child or adolescent.
- **Openness:** Please discuss the applicant(s) ability to accept a child may struggle initially, that the child may have their own ideas that differ from the applicant(s), and that they as parents will need to grow and adapt with their child through the lifespan.
- **Self-esteem:** It is important for the applicant(s) to have a strong sense of self and that they are not adopting to restore their personal self-worth.
- **Assertiveness:** The applicant(s) will need to display the ability to be assertive and be an advocate for their child as it will be their job to teach these same skills to their child.
- **Problem-Solving:** Please discuss the applicant(s) ability to solve problems and handle conflict and tension, as these skills will be necessary in parenting.
- **Dependency:** Please discuss the applicant(s) ability to handle situations on their own.
- **Empathy:** Please discuss if the applicant(s) display empathy for the difficulties that adoption entails for a child and that they understand the difficult history the child will bring with them.
- **Emotional Stability:** Please discuss the applicant(s) ability to handle daily challenges and remain emotionally stable.
- **Flexibility:** Please discuss the applicant(s) ability to adapt when faced with different situations, and if they are willing to learn new parenting techniques to meet the needs of their individual child.
- **Impulsivity:** Please assess if the applicant(s) made the decision to adopt on an impulse or if they have taken the time to reflect on all implications of decision.
- **Responsibility:** Please discuss if the applicant(s) can plan, organize, and carry out tasks related to parenting and if they can persevere through difficult times.
- **Sociability:** Assess if the applicant(s) will be able to provide a social environment for their child to help them grow and develop the proper social skills for the future.
- **Frustration tolerance:** Assess if the applicant(s) can tolerate frustration well enough to cope with a child who is struggling and has a more difficult transition than anticipated. Also assess if they will be able to teach this skill to their child.
- **Ability to process grief:** Assess if the applicant(s) has unprocessed grief related to the death of a child, sudden loss of a spouse, parent or family member, empty

nest, infertility, or personal crisis.

- **Ability to establish bonds:** Please assess attachment styles in applicant(s), looking for secure attachments in their lives, as this shows they can have a secure attachment with their adopted child.
- c) **Ability to cope and manage grief.** Explore the ability of the couple/applicant to identify, accept, and express feelings of loss. Examine how they have worked through their previous losses. Describe resiliency, specifically regarding dealing with infertility for both applicants (if applicable); acceptance of feelings of loss and effects on self-esteem; self-assurance; couple relationship and social adjustment.
- d) **Ability to have healthy relationships** Explore if the applicant(s) has been able to have significant relationships in their past. Please describe if the applicant(s) have ever needed therapeutic support, reason for therapeutic support, and progress achieved. For married couples, address if their current relationship appears balanced and respectful. Please discuss if they have shared life experiences that has led to needing outside support. *(This is different information from what is needed in the couple's relationship section below – please include all information in both sections).*
- e) **Ability to establish bonds with others.** Since attachment bonds do not happen instantly, it is important to evaluate how the applicant(s) have established strong attachments throughout their lives. Estranged relationships will need to be described and assessed.
- f) **Feedback of the overall testing results.** *If there are concerns about the testing outcomes with respect to the applicant's adoption request please contact Holt before writing report.* Please summarize the tests used, and findings, for each parent. Discuss the results of your testing with the family, and briefly describe how each parent reacted to and/or reflected on the findings of your report in this section. This discussion should be more thorough in cases where testing may indicate a potential challenge to parenting or a personality concern (i.e. Describe how the person currently manages and how they plan to address this issue should it complicate the adoptive parenting role/relationship).

4) Family dynamics

- a) **Parenting style of Applicant(s) family of origin.** Describe how the applicant's parents exercised authority, as well as the opinion of each applicant about the discipline methods and parenting style they were raised with. Describe the values that the applicant(s) learned from their parents.
- b) **Couple's Relationship.** For married applicants, assess the following: the couple's stability, their ability to express feelings, their communication and problem-solving skills, their degree of satisfaction in their relationship, time they share together, how they manage their independence, common hobbies they share, and the respect they have for each other's individual pursuits.

For single applicants, this section does not apply, except in cases where the applicant is in a relationship but not intending to co-parent the adopted child (in these cases use couple's instructions)

- c) **Family routine and structure.** Please discuss what the family's schedule and routine will look like at the time of the adoption. How much time can each family member dedicate to the new child, how will the applicant(s) dedicate time to themselves, what is their family and social network going to look like, and what

will the distribution of household tasks look like? How does each family member feel about these changes? If this is a single parent, please go into more detail about their support system.

5) Expectations regarding the child.

- a) Applicant(s) expectations regarding profile of children available for adoption.**
Explore the expectations of the applicant(s) in relation to the child, such as: gender, age range, health status and behavior. Discuss whether the applicant(s) has the necessary openness and knowledge to adopt a child from the protection system, which involves a potential history of abuse, neglect and trauma.
- b) Expectations regarding the child's attachment.** Please discuss how the family will handle the relationship with the child possibly taking longer to form, as attachments are not instant. How will the family handle if the child attaches to one person in the family before others, and how will they work to strengthen the bond?
- c) Openness to adoption of child with special needs.** Describe in detail the family's opinion of how they will handle the adoption of a child with special needs. If they are not open to special needs, please explain the reason why. Children over age 10 and large sibling groups are included in the special needs category. Please have them discuss generally the types of medical/emotional/developmental needs they are open to so you can assess their ability to adopt a child with these needs. Please discuss if they have the support of their social network and family, and what their availability for health care, mental health services and educational services is like in their area. Please assess how they will face possible rejection or risk that may arise following the adoption and how will they cover the possible needs of their child.

6) Parenting style.

- a) Parenting style of Applicant(s).** It is important to identify and explain their parenting style/s, and their ability to establish boundaries. Previous experience with children and caregiving should be noted. If they are parenting currently, please discuss children here. It is important to explore the family dynamics and the amount of time each parent will be able to spend with the child. Please describe which parent will be the primary caregiver (observations can be supported from psychological testing). Please discuss the applicant(s) ability to be sensitive to their child's needs, provide affection unconditionally, promote self-esteem, work towards instilling empathy, teach social skills, shape the development of their child and foster independence.
- b) Disciplinary style of Applicant(s).**
Please identify the applicant(s) disciplinary style. Identify if they have the ability to listen to their child and receive and express opinions and feelings. Discuss the level of flexibility they have in their approaches, if they understand discipline could differ between children depending on the child's personality and developmental age, their ideas about rules and limits, and the ways to apply rewards and punishments. If married, please discuss if the applicants disciplinary styles complement one other.

7) PROFESSIONAL CONCEPT AND RECOMMENDATION:

This report is given to the Adoption Committee in Colombia, in its capacity as legal authority to approve the suitability of a prospective adoptive family. The psychologist shall provide enough technical elements to determine if the family meets the criteria of mental suitability for adoption. If there are mental health diagnoses or past traumas, please discuss the impact/s on the applicant's parenting here, if any, and note how resolution was achieved. The professional assessment shall also include whether applicants present an adequate understanding and

preparation to embrace a child/ren or adolescent/s who may have special needs and/or experienced trauma. Please add a statement of recommendation for adoption of the profile of child requested by the family, including age, gender and number of children from Colombia here (contact Holt if you have any concerns about offering a recommendation).

Name of evaluator

Signature

Professional Title/specialization

License Number

Notarization with ink and embossed stamp

***Addendums/Annexes**

Please include interview reports, profiles of each applicant per test conducted, and interpretations, graphs and/or charts articulating raw or coded scores from the testing used, materials used for preparation and assessment processes along with certificates of health or psychological/psychiatric intervention.