PROGRAM HISTORY
Dillon has a long history in Vietnam including:

- Adoptions beginning in 2001. From 2001 until 2008, Dillon placed more than 100 children into loving families.
- At the time, the majority of the children we placed from Vietnam were very young, but about 20 percent had special needs, such as vision problems, being HIV-positive and hepatitis C-positive.
- Dillon currently helps more than 400 children in four provinces with educational scholarships.
- We also provide funding to a boys home in Da lat.
- We have renovated orphanages, helped fund heart surgeries and put playground equipment in orphanages.

Dillon International received approval to place children from Vietnam with adoptive families in the United States beginning Sept. 16, 2014.

Dillon provided adoption services until adoptions by Americans were placed on hold in 2008, following the expiration of a Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. and Vietnam. The U.S. Department of State and Vietnam's Department of Adoptions have recently initiated a new agreement allowing intercountry adoptions to resume through a special program to serve orphaned children who are older or have special needs.

HAGUE STATUS
Vietnam is a member of the Hague Convention, so adoptions from Vietnam are Hague adoption cases.

CENTRAL AUTHORITY
The Department of Adoptions (DA) is the central authority within The Ministry of Justice of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

ADOPTION LAWS
Effective on September 16, the United States will process Hague Convention adoptions from Vietnam through a program for children with special needs, children aged five and older, and
children in biological sibling groups (Special Adoption Program). The United States will not, however, process Hague Convention intercountry adoptions from Vietnam that fall outside the parameters of the Special Adoption Program.

GENDER GUIDELINES
Families can request a child of a particular gender.

CHILDREN IN NEED OF FAMILIES
The Vietnam program is a special needs program, and families applying to adopt from Vietnam will need to be open to a range of special needs. The special needs range from minor and/or correctable to significant and belong to the following categories:

- Cleft lip/palate
- Congenital heart disease (e.g., ASD, VSD, PDA, Tetralogy of fallot, pulmonary atresia)
- Children with limb deformities (e.g., partial or missing limbs, webbed fingers and toes, hemiplegia, clubfeet, hip dysplasia)
- Infectious disease (e.g., Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV)
- Hearing impairments (e.g., ear atresia, microtia, hearing loss, deafness)
- Vision impairments (e.g., cataracts, glaucoma, nystagmus, missing eye, blind)
- Neural disease (e.g., spinal meningocele, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, epilepsy)
- Blood disorders (e.g., thalassemia, hemophilia)
- Gastrointestinal (e.g., anal atresia/imperforate anus, megacolon)
- Urogenital disorders (e.g., hypospadias, undescended testes, genital malformation, ambiguous genitalia)
- Skin conditions (e.g., albinism, hemangioma or nevus birthmarks, burns)
- Mental challenges (e.g., mental deficits, microcephaly, Down Syndrome, brain abnormalities)
- Older children who may have attachment, emotional, and/or behavioral issues (generally 5 years and older)

CARE OF CHILDREN
Orphanages in Vietnam are referred to as Child Welfare Protections Centers or Social Sponsor Centers. The condition of each orphanage depends on whether the location is urban or located in a rural setting and the financial resources available to furnish and maintain the facilities and to hire competent, caring staff.

Children reared in orphanages are accustomed to highly structured daily routines with strictly scheduled sleep, feeding and play times. Children in orphanages are used to sleeping with other children in the same room, and sometimes in the same crib or bed.

Infants are often fed rice cereal mixed with their formula and drink it from their bottle. Often this mixture is very thick and very hot. Children in Vietnam are not accustomed to baby food. When
children move from formula to eating solid food, usually between 1 to 2 years old, they frequently eat rice soup, noodles, rice, egg, fish, fruits and vegetables.

Children are bathed usually with a tub of water or water hose as the majority of Vietnam is very hot and humid and bathing is used to keep clean as well as cool from the heat. Full immersion baths in a bathtub may not be an experience the child has ever had.

The children use “squat” toilets in the floor and probably have never seen a Western toilet. Children are not used to sitting on the rim of a toilet seat and may actually try to stand and squat on the seat just as they are accustomed to doing. Some orphanages do use potty chairs, which are ceramic pots to toilet train children. However, the term toilet training usually means that children are lined up on potties during scheduled toilet times, usually first thing in the morning and after meals.

It is not customary for boys to be circumcised. Many Asian infants have Mongolian spots often on their back or top of the buttocks, but they can also be on the arms and legs. Mongolian spots look like bruises and will slowly begin to fade, usually disappearing by age five or six.

Infants and children are immunized. However, Dillon recommends your child’s pediatrician check titers or re-administer vaccinations received by your child while they were under the care of the orphanage.

**RISK FACTORS**

In addition to the types of medical special needs, we also want families to be prepared for the possibility of health and developmental issues common in children residing in orphanage care, including malnourishment, developmental delays due to institutionalization and attachment issues.

It is difficult to assess initially if your child’s developmental delays are due to lack of opportunity or lack of ability. Most experts agree children typically fall behind in at least one, if not all areas of development, one month for every 3-4 months they are in an institution. Additionally, experts state a child who has been in institutional care needs one month out of the institution for every month they have been in an institution to catch up and meet their developmental milestones. It takes time, but most children it catch up developmentally.

Issues with attachment and post-traumatic stress disorder may also be present due to the children having multiple losses, multiple caregivers, and also multiple placements from birth family to orphanage to possibly a foster family and ultimately to an adoptive family. With each change of placement and caregiver, trust is eroded and it takes longer to trust again.

These same factors that place children at risk of attachment disturbances and post-traumatic stress disorder also place children at risk of neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse and sexual abuse. Although the realities of your child’s past may never be known, it is important to consider that it is possible it was a part of your child’s early life experience.
Families must understand that all children will have developmental and emotional needs. In fact, sometimes the emotional needs run much deeper than the physical or medical needs and require much more attention and care.

Although the medical and developmental information provided for children is limited, it does seem to be reliable. However, families always need to be prepared for the possibility there may be instances of an undiagnosed medical, developmental or emotional condition.

FAMILY REQUIREMENTS
Please refer to Adoption Guide.

APPLICATION PROCESS
Dillon places Vietnamese children with families throughout the United States. We have never found geographic distance to hinder the process or our work relationship with families. The Home Study Application will contain some forms specifically utilized in Vietnamese adoptions. We understand the Home Study Application can feel overwhelming, but please keep in mind that it provides the opportunity to prepare for your home study and rehearse for your dossier. We take great care to review the documents with an eye toward revisions that will be necessary when it is time for your family to gather your dossier documents.

HOME STUDY PROCESS
Families adopting from Vietnam must work with a home study agency that is licensed in their state and should consult Dillon before proceeding with the home study. Families will need to complete a minimum of 12 hours of pre-adoption education and training prior to completion of your home study. Families must complete home study updates if there are any significant changes in the family’s situation, if their state of residence requires annual updates or if they need to extend the validity of their I-800A approval.

USCIS PROCESS
Families file the I-800A and I-800 with the USCIS National Benefits Center. USCIS technically has up to 90 days to process the I-800A application.

DOSSIER PROCESS
Families must submit an authenticated dossier to the DA. The standard dossier documents consist of an application to the DA, the home study, birth certificates, marriage license, divorce decree (if applicable), employment verification letters, employment letter, medical letter, clearance letters from local law enforcement, I-800A approval notice, copies of passports and family and home photos. Dillon provides dossier authentication services for all families adopting a child from Vietnam. Our Dossier Coordinator processes dossier documents through the Secretary of State and the Vietnamese Consulate prior to Dillon sending your dossier to Vietnam.

Families pay an initial dossier processing fee to help cover some of the costs up front, but most of the time, it is not sufficient to cover all the expenses. Dillon covers the additional expenses and then bills your family after the dossier has been completely authenticated. We send your family’s
dossier to Vietnam, where the dossier will be translated before the dossier can be sent to the DA in Hanoi. The DA has the final authority to approve the family to adopt a child from Vietnam.

**REFERRAL PROCESS**

When a referral of child has been sent to Dillon, we first check to see if we have families that are currently in the Vietnam program that might be open to the referral of the child that we received, based on course on the special needs and age of the child.

If we do not have a family that is open to considering that child, we will check with our Open Options program to see if a family in that program might open to the special needs and age of the child. If we do not have any families in any of the other Dillon country program, we will then place the child on Dillon’s Waiting Child page to look for a family outside of the families already in process with our agency.

When a child is identified for your family, you will be contacted by your social worker or Dillon staff. You will receive both the Vietnamese and English translation of all the referral paperwork made available from the child’s orphanage, as well as any photos or video of the child. Due to the fact that children come into orphanage care due to abandonment, birth family history often is not available or provided by the country. There is also minimal medical information available on children. Referral information provided to families typically includes a medical examination record, urinalysis, blood test results for syphilis, Hepatitis B and HIV, growth measurements, developmental assessment, daily routine report, and a couple of photos.

Based on families’ reports to Dillon, the referral information is fairly reliable, albeit often vague. However there may be an undiagnosed medical, developmental or emotional condition, and families need to be prepared for this possibility.

We highly recommend that you review the referral information with your pediatrician, a medical specialist, and/or an international adoption clinic prior to making your decision. This is an enormous decision, and we want you to take the time you need to ensure it is the right decision for your family.

Let us know if you have questions, and we will work with our representative in Vietnam to obtain an updated report from the orphanage. At any time from verbally stating that your family wants to move forward being in process to adopt the child that has been identified for your family, a family may withdraw their application to adopt a particular child in light of new information they may receive about the child’s medical condition or health status.

**TRAVEL PREPARATION**

Dillon provides families with a Vietnam Travel Guide that thoroughly outlines the adoption trip and provides travel preparation guidance. Once the family receives provisional I-800 approval from USCIS and the DA has completed the matching letter, which is the official letter acknowledging that your family is in process to adopt a specific child, and the Article 5 letter from the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, we will wait to receive a Giving and Receiving court date
clearance from the DA. After the Giving and Receiving ceremony date is fixed, then and only then is it safe to purchase your airfare tickets.

Families must travel to receive their child and complete the adoption in Vietnam. Dillon requires that two adults travel to Vietnam. If you are married, we strongly encourage both parents to travel to be part of the initial bonding process and to personally experience their child's birth country. Both spouses must be present for the court hearing in Vietnam, and at that point, it is possible for one spouse to return home if necessary.

Families are welcome to take their children with them when they travel. The decision about whether or not to take your children is very personal and involves many considerations. There is no hard-and-fast right answer. The right thing to do in this situation is going to differ from family to family.

Here are some questions to think about if you are considering traveling with a child to Vietnam:

1. Does the child have any medical issues that you may have to face in Vietnam? Air pollution may trigger allergies and asthma, and medical care can be pretty limited in some provinces.
2. Is your child easy going or demanding? Do they get bored easily and want you to entertain them, or can they entertain themselves?
3. Do you think having your child along will help or hinder your new baby’s adjustments and bonding? Is your child likely to experience sibling rivalry?
4. How will your child do with long plane rides, staying in hotels, eating different foods, being in large crowds and being the center of attention? Does your child enjoy new experiences?
5. Does your child WANT to go, or would he/she be just as happy being home?
6. Will missed school, sporting events, and social activities be a problem for your child?
7. Can you afford it?

Before you decide, talk with other adoptive parents who have and have not traveled with their children to get their perspectives. In the end, the choice is up to you. You know your family best – no one else can make the right decision for you. If you decide to take young children to Vietnam, Dillon recommends you bring an additional adult to help care for these children while you are attending to the adoption proceedings and bonding needs of your new child.

**TRAVEL**

All families are responsible for scheduling their own flight arrangements to and from Vietnam after Dillon notifies them of their travel dates. Families typically travel to Vietnam individually or maybe with one other family.

Dillon representatives in Vietnam assist the family with completing the adoption process at the Giving and Receiving ceremony in the child’s province, the passport application, medical exam, as well as assistance in applying for the child’s U.S. visa. Dillon representatives can, if requested, take care of arranging all hotel accommodations, ground transportation, in-country flight
arrangements to and from the child’s province, and adoption-related appointments. Families are responsible for paying for these services while in Vietnam.

The standard trip consists of 14-21 days in Vietnam, including arrival into Ho Chi Minh City. If your child’s province is outside of Ho Chi Minh City, then you will travel to your child’s province for the Giving and Receiving ceremony and then back to Ho Chi Minh City for completion of the passport and medical exam.

Families will then fly to Hanoi for completion of the visa with the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi. You will receive your child either the day you arrive in the province or the following day at the Giving and Receiving ceremony. After receiving your child, and after the Giving and Receiving ceremony is completed, families will usually travel that same day back to Ho Chi Minh City.

Once back in Ho Chi Minh City, the Dillon representative will apply for the passport. Once the passport is issued, then the Dillon representative will assist you and your child with completing the medical exam. After the medical exam is completed, the Dillon representative will assist the family in securing tickets to fly to Hanoi for the visa process.

Dillon representatives will accompany you throughout your trip. They will pick you up and drop you off at the airports, get you to your appointments, and review your adoption and visa paperwork.

Families need to be aware that the season during which families travel, if there is more than one family traveling, the age of child being adopted, the number of travel companions, upgrades to hotel accommodations, the day of the week of the Embassy visa appointment, the adoption proceedings policy of the child’s province, and whether or not families are able to visit the orphanage can impact the length of the trip, hotel rates, in-country airfare and, ultimately, actual travel costs. We try to keep travel fees manageable for families and still provide a comfortable traveling experience. All Dillon fees, including all post-placement fees, must be paid in full before you depart.

**TRANSITION OF CHILD**

Most parents have over a year to prepare for their child. However, most children have little preparation for meeting their family and may not be told until they are being driven to the Giving and Receiving ceremony. There are many reasons why an orphanage director may not tell a child they are being adopted until just a short time before. For instance, they may not want to risk hurting a child’s heart if the prospective family ends up not moving forward with the adoption.

Additionally, even if the child is prepared, they probably do not have a genuine understanding of what it means to be adopted and have a permanent family. Regardless of when or how your child is prepared for you, we will always ask permission for you to send a family photo album to your child’s orphanage before you travel to Vietnam.

Your child will be placed in your care either the day you arrive in the province or the following day of the Giving and Receiving ceremony. You may receive your child at the Giving and
Receiving ceremony, hotel lobby, your hotel room, or at the orphanage. The orphanage director, a caregiver, and a representative from the local justice department, will usually be present. It is considered a great honor among orphanage staff to bring your child to you; therefore, it is possible that you may not get a chance to meet your child’s primary caregiver.

It is at this time that you may ask questions about your child through the assistance of your Dillon representative. Once the Giving and Receiving ceremony has been concluded, the adoption is final. You have no recourse after you sign the adoption papers, should you have second thoughts. In fact, you could be charged with child abandonment under Vietnamese law if you were to relinquish your child in Vietnam after signing the adoption papers.

If you are not comfortable with your child (e.g., health concerns, severe developmental delays), ask for more time. You may ask your Dillon representative to request a physician to examine the child and answer your questions. It is better to extend your trip and be certain about your decision to complete the adoption.

We know you are excited about receiving your child, but keep in mind they may not be quite as excited as you are. This will be a sudden, enormous change they may not understand at all. To your child, you look funny, sound funny, smell funny, and talk funny. The biggest question looming in our child’s mind is, “Can I trust these strange people to take care of me and keep me safe?”

Children handle change or grief the same way adults do. Your child may stop eating or eat too much. They may sleep all the time, not at all, or wake up often in the middle of the night. They may withdraw from others and become very quiet or lethargic. They may even show developmental regression, meaning they may no longer be able to accomplish tasks (i.e., sitting up, walking) that the caregivers said they could do. They may be irritable, cry uncontrollably, scream, or tantrum for hours or even days. Your child will be learning if they can trust you or not.

To encourage healthy attachment, let your child be fully dependent on you to meet all their needs for food, comfort, and nurture. This will help establish a trusting relationship. Encourage lots of eye contact in all your activities.

**POST-PLACEMENT SUPERVISION**

The DA requires families to complete a minimum of three (3) post-placement visits with a social worker 1-months, 3-months, and 6-months after the child arrives home. Typically, the social worker that completed the family’s home study will also provide post-placement supervision, but this is not always the case. The DA requires that post-placement visits occur in the home with all family members present.

In addition to the DA post-placement requirements, your family is responsible for completing any additional post-placement reports required by your state of residence.

**POST-PLACEMENT REPORTS**

After meeting with the family, the social worker prepares the post-placement report based on the DA’s guidelines. Families submit photos of the family and child. The reports and photos are
submitted to the Dillon representative who will then send copies to the orphanage as well as the DA.

**FAMILY REPORTS**
The family is responsible for completing post-placement reports every 6 months for 2 years after the 6-month supervised post placement report with the family’s social worker.

**U.S. ADOPTION FINALIZATION**
Adoptions in Vietnam are finalized in country. However, Dillon requires that all families re-finalize the adoption in the U.S. court.

**U.S. CITIZENSHIP**
All children completing a Hague adoption from Vietnam receive an IH-3 visa and, therefore, will become a U.S. citizen upon entering the United States. Families will automatically receive their child’s U.S. Certificate of Citizenship within 45 days of returning home.

**LIFETIME SUPPORT SERVICES**
I realize talk of heritage camps may seem a bit premature to those of you who are waiting for your precious child to arrive, but it is never too early to learn about the culture of your child’s birth country. Siblings who are grappling with the wait time may enjoy the infusion of fun and spending time with Vietnamese adoptees and their siblings. The fellowship of adoptive families can provide an opportunity for new friendships. The education you absorb prior to your child arriving home will reap untold benefits. Experiencing heritage camp before your child arrives will deepen your understanding of the importance of this experience for your child one day. We encourage you to make Vietnam Heritage Camp a regular part of your future summers with your child.

Dillon launched its first Vietnam Birthland Tour in 2013. Based on our experience, we believe a good time to visit your child’s birth country for the first time is between 8 and 12 years of age, but the right time for each child will vary depending on the child’s emotional development, maturity and temperament.

**BACKGROUND SEARCHES**
Although it is not currently possible for adoptees to search for their birth families, through the Vietnam Birthland Tour, Dillon can help your family make connections to the places and people significant in your child’s life before they were adopted. Families generally visit their child’s orphanage and finding place and sometimes are able to meet their child’s orphanage director and caregivers.