



# DESIGN RESEARCH PROJECT:

Creating early  
connections between  
adoptive parents  
and their children



# ABSTRACT

Thousands of children are adopted internationally into the United States every year. Many of these children come from institutional care in orphanages and suffer from trauma and neglect. These early experiences often have intense negative impacts on the transition and attachment of these children into their new families. This study specifically focuses on adopted children from Bulgaria and the impact of adoptive parents’ initial experiences on attachment with their children.

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# RESEARCHERS

## Coleen Sallot

Ms. Sallot is a design student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. As an adoptive parent herself, she is especially interested in discovering ways to use design to help ease the transition of internationally adopted children into their new families.

# INTRODUCTION

**Research Question:** What are adoptive parents' initial experiences when adopting a child from Bulgaria and what are the impacts of those initial experiences on attachment?

As an adoptive parent of two children from Bulgaria and China, I have witnessed the challenges of adoption first-hand. I brought my son home in June 2011, at a time when the Bulgaria program had only been available for a couple of years and long before they had decided to move to a foster care system. He had been left in the hospital and transferred to the orphanage when he was only three weeks old. He was born with major foot and hand deformities, which required multiple surgeries.

I first visited him in November 2010 at the orphanage in Pazardjik, a small town surrounded by mountains, about 1 ½ hours from the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. It was a baby orphanage with 88 children under the age of 3, yet when I entered it was eerily quiet. I was directed to a visiting room, full of toys and a crib. When I met him the first time, he literally did not move for two hours. Concerned, I came up with a game, where I put a stuffed animal on my head and caused it to fall in his lap. And finally, his big black eyes looked at me--and he smiled.

I found out later that he had been tied to his crib for most of his life. He came home in a completely shut-down state and literally took an entire year to "wake up." We have done every intervention possible: special schooling, speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, private school, counseling, medication. And yet it wasn't until his eighth surgery went awry--a full five years after he came home--that he finally looked me in the eye and told me he loved me and we finally became attached. At that moment, I realized that without attachment, a child is just a leaf blowing in the wind--never belonging, never anchored, never actually feeling human. It is absolutely essential to their well being.

The goal of this research project is to better understand the initial experiences of adoptive parents as a whole. With a focus on attachment in those beginning stages and utilizing the Evolutionary Theory of Attachment, developed by John Bowlby, Mary Ainsworth, and others, this study will discuss interventions to improve those first impressions and help spark attachment and allow it to grow over time.



# LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

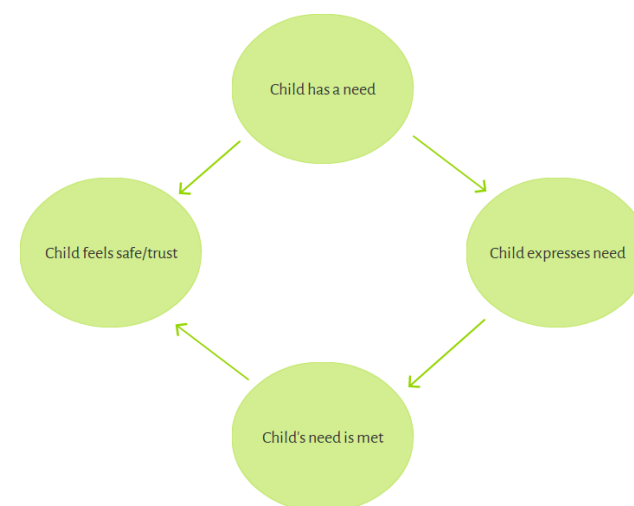
In 2017, Americans adopted 147 children from the country of Bulgaria (U.S. State Department, 2017). Bulgaria, once part of the Soviet Union, sits in Eastern Europe, bordered by the Black Sea. Today, Bulgaria has one of the highest rates of institutionalized children in Europe, and over half are of Roma descent (AGCI, 2018).

Fortunately, over the course of the past decade, there has been a huge effort to close Bulgaria's orphanages and move to a foster care system. Due to efforts by a variety of humanitarian organizations, such as All God's Children International (AGCI) and Hope and Homes for Children, the number of orphanages in Bulgaria has declined from 144 in 2007 to 57, and the number of children in those orphanages has declined from 8,019 in 2007 to 1,300 today (AGCI, 2018). In addition, there are active plans to close the remaining baby orphanages by the end of next year (Hope and Homes for Children, 2016).

Orphanages are generally recognized as a poor environment for raising a child. Typically, children are housed in large rooms lined with dozens of cribs or beds. It is not uncommon for a single caregiver to care for between 6-10 children, even as infants. In fact, due to the variety of caregivers

that go in and out, it is estimated that children will have had up to 60 caregivers by the time they turn two. Caregivers also tend to only take care of a child's physical needs, not their emotional needs, and will not respond to a child who cries (University of Pittsburgh, November 2012, p. 4).

This process is exactly the opposite of what happens in a normal parent-child relationship. The diagram below reflects a secure attachment between a parent and child (Montgomery, 2013), which John Bowlby believed is based not on meeting actual physical needs but on the caregiving associated with meeting those needs (Cherry, 2018).



British psychologist John Bowlby is often considered to be the father of the Evolutionary Theory of Attachment. He is said to have described attachment as "a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings." (Cherry, 2018)

Bowlby first became interested in child development as a volunteer at a school for special needs children. Those experiences prompted him to focus on the impact of family life on a child's emotional and mental well-being (Ackerman, 2018).

Prior to this time, attachment was viewed as a learned behavior, merely the result of a child-caregiver relationship (Ackerman, 2018). Bowlby, however, viewed attachment as something more evolutionary: that children are born with "an innate drive to form attachments with caregivers." (Cherry, 2018)

He became particularly interested in understanding the distress children go through when they are separated from their primary caregiver. When he realized that feedings did not reduce their anxiety, he came to the conclusion that a child's early attachments are critical to their success throughout their life (Cherry, 2018).

Bowlby's views are particularly relevant in the realm of adoption. In addition to barriers caused by trauma and neglect, adopted children experience disrupted attachment due to the transference of attachment from the birth parents and caregivers to the adoptive parents (Hafetz, 2015). Often described as a primal wound, these experiences can negatively affect attachment for much of their life (Kittlitz, 2010).

This results in what another psychologist, Mary Ainsworth, categorized as four distinct styles of attachment, based on a child's life experiences:

1. **Secure:** children are able to separate from their parents, seek comfort when frightened, and prefer their parents over strangers.
2. **Ambivalent:** children are excessively frightened of strangers, highly distressed when separated, and unable to calm themselves down after the parent returns.
3. **Avoidant:** children may avoid or not prefer parents and typically have problems asking for help or seeking comfort from parents.
4. **Disorganized:** children show a lack of attachment behavior or may display a mix of avoidant and ambivalent behaviors (Cherry, 2018).

# METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this particular project, my research focused on adoptive parents who have adopted a child from Bulgaria and who are also part of the Bulgarian Reunion Adoption group. This group meets on an annual basis in Cincinnati, Ohio, and is composed of 30-45 families who have adopted children from Bulgaria. I conducted a focus group and a survey with members of the group.

## Focus Group

I conducted a focus group with two mothers who have adopted from Bulgaria. Both are between 35-45 years old, and each has adopted two or more children.

### PARTICIPANT #1



Lives in Michigan  
Single mom  
Three children (8, 11, 14)  
Adopted from Bulgaria and Russia  
One child with special needs

### PARTICIPANT #2



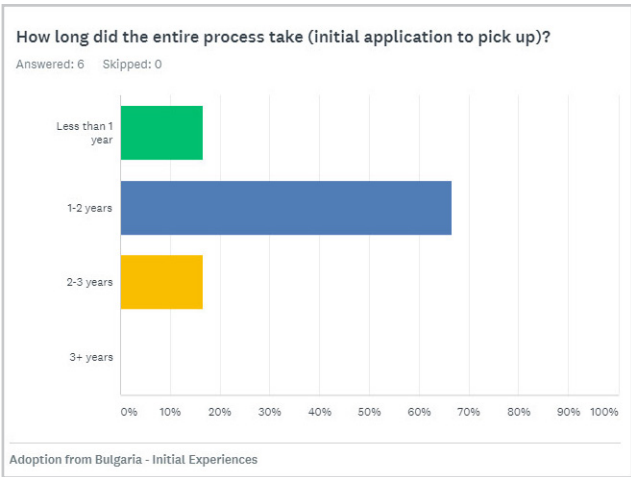
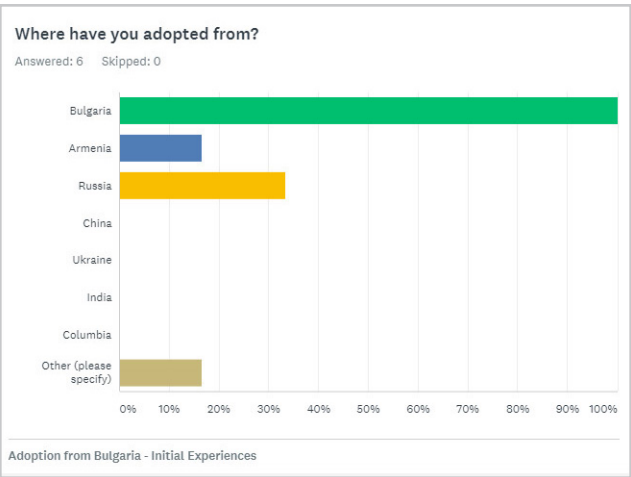
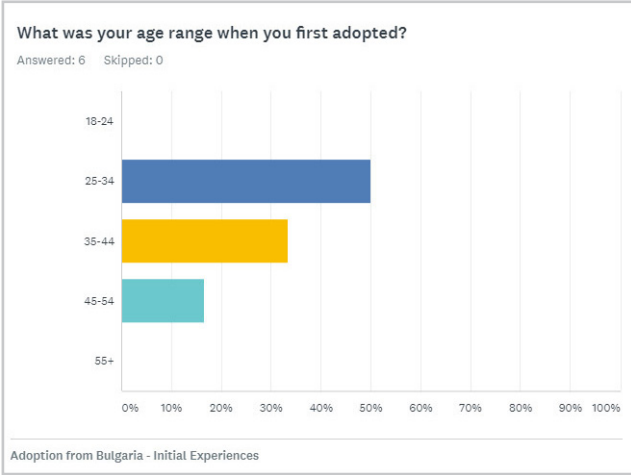
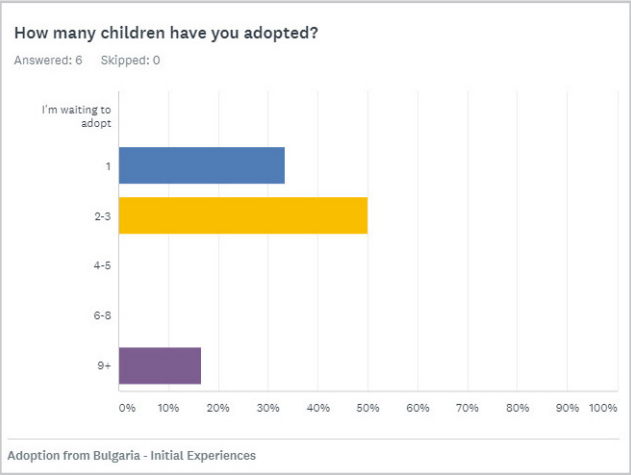
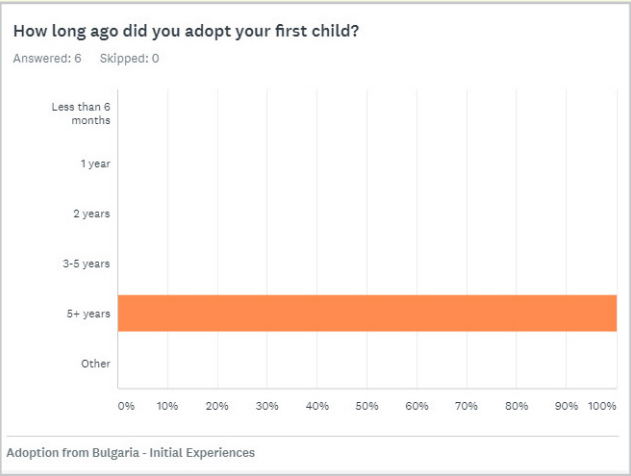
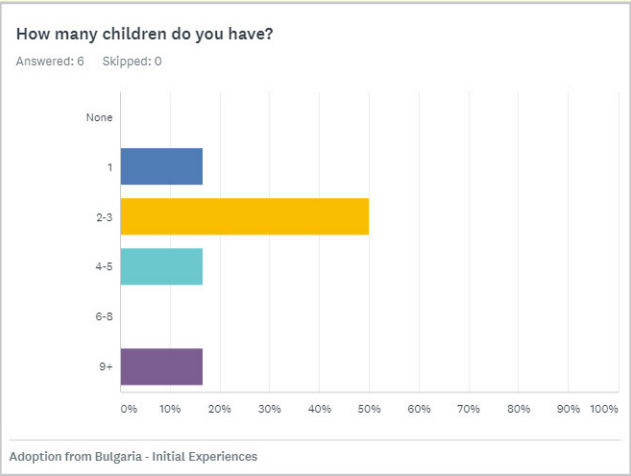
Lives in Ohio  
Married  
Three children (7, 9, 10)  
Adopted from Bulgaria and Russia  
Three child with special needs

The focus group was conducted via Google Hang-outs and lasted well over an hour. Neither had video capabilities so only audio was recorded.

## Focus Group Questions

1. Why did you choose to adopt from Bulgaria?
2. What did you do to prepare for your adoption?
3. How did you find your child?
4. What kind of information did you receive?
5. How did your child react the first time they met you?
6. What did you do to stay in contact while you were waiting to pick them up?
7. How did your child react when you picked them up? Did they remember you?
8. What do you think would have helped your child throughout this process?

## Survey Questions/Results



# METHODOLOGY

## Survey

A detailed survey was used to solicit information from families in the Bulgarian Adoption Reunion group. The survey was created in SurveyMonkey, and participants were solicited via email.

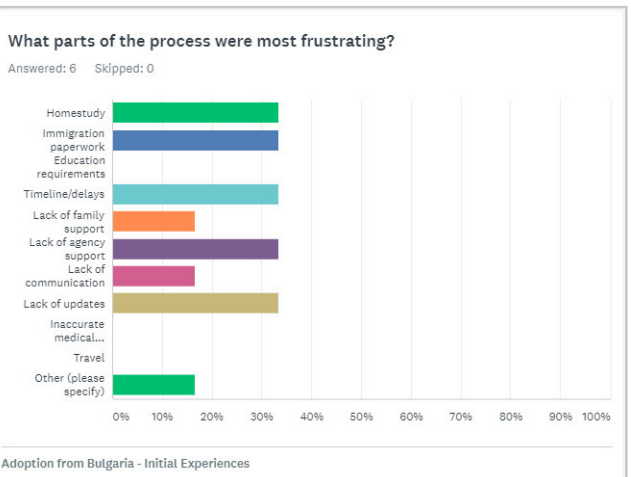
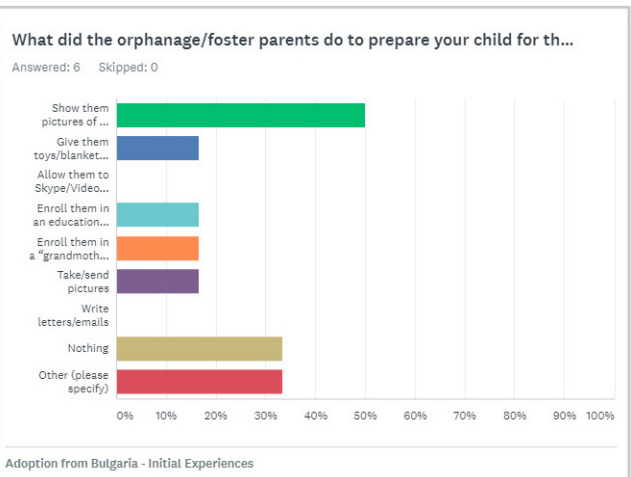
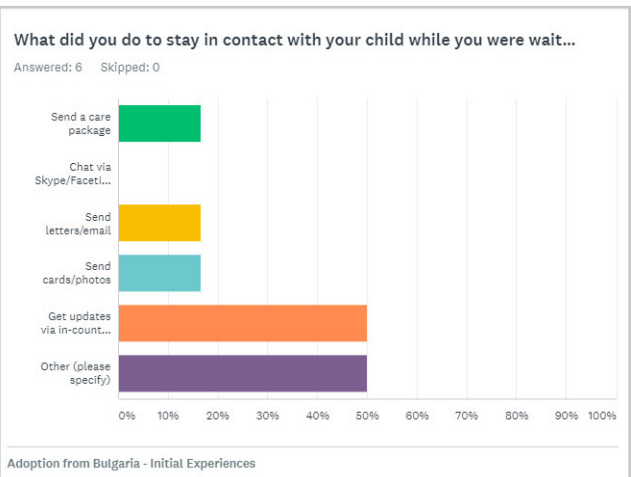
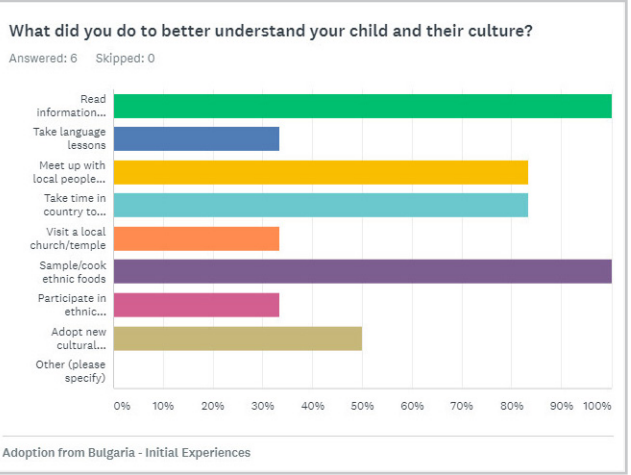
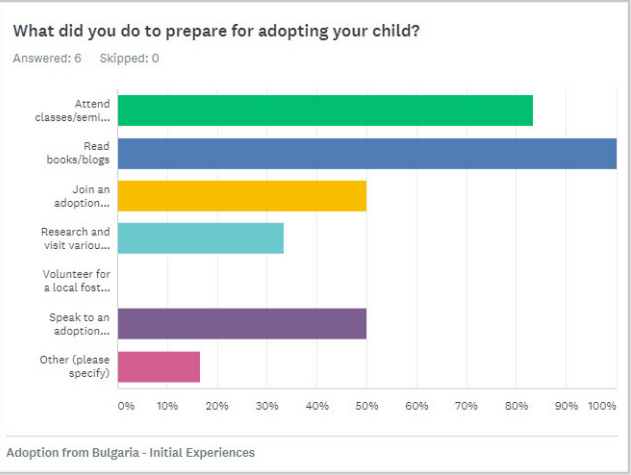
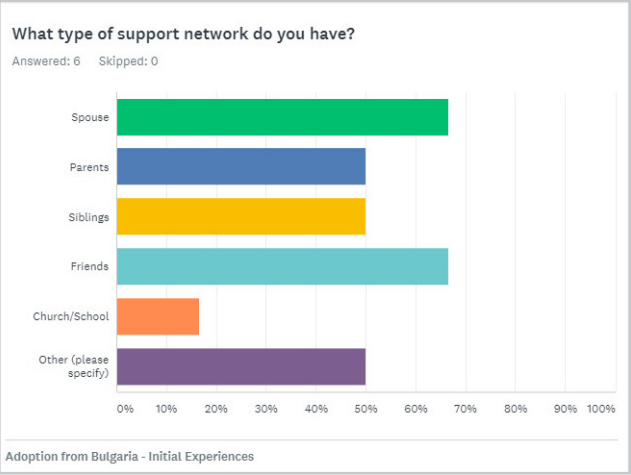
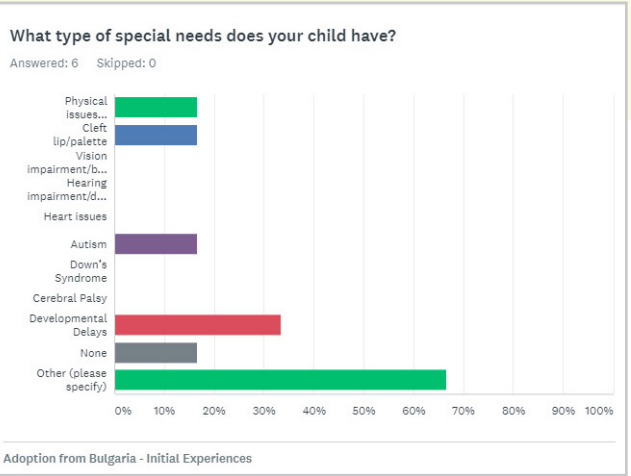
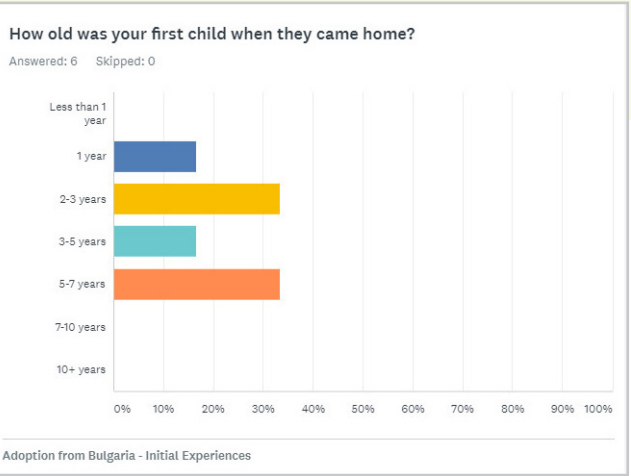
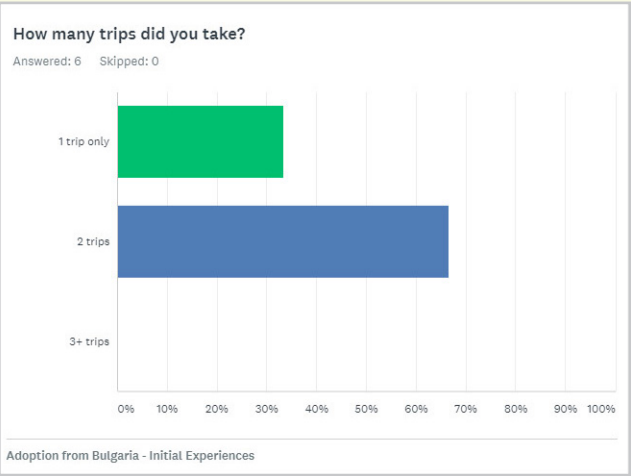
Questions were related to their perspective as an adoptive parent of a child from Bulgaria, and their initial experiences surrounding the adoption process and bringing their child home.

A total of six members from the Bulgarian Adoption Reunion group completed the survey.

## Highlights

- The majority of participants had between one and three children, most of whom were adopted.
- Several had adopted multiple children from multiple countries, including Bulgaria, Russia, Armenia and Serbia.
- The average of age of participants when they first adopted was between 25 - 44 years old.
- Half of the children were three and under when they came home.
- The majority of children had some sort of special need.
- All had completed their adoptions more than five years ago.

## Survey Questions/Results



# RESULTS & FINDINGS

Upon reviewing the results of the focus group and survey, it became obvious that adoption from Bulgaria is a challenging endeavor. For the majority of participants, the adoption process from initial application to bringing their child home took two years. Due to the nature of the program, the majority of the children had special needs. Also, due to challenges with the care provided to these children, they often suffered from abuse, neglect, malnutrition, and developmental delays.

When I brought home my son, I had always thought my situation was unique. But in conducting the focus group and reading the results of the survey, it seems everyone has struggled with the same types of issues.

## **No contact was allowed between adoptive parents and children.**

For the most part, this seemed to be a universal thorn for parents. Electronic communication via Skype or email is virtually non-existent. As a result, some parents went to extreme lengths to receive updates on their children. Participant #1 actually hired an English tutor to help fill the gap. Most sent letters or pictures.

Only a handful of participants sent their children care packages. Participant #1 sent her daughter care packages on a regular basis. Most, however,

did not have much success due to issues with cost, shipping, and delivery. Often the children never received the care packages, or the items were lost upon pickup.

## **The children were unaware of who their adoptive parents were, even before pickup.**

Even for people who adopted older kids, none of the children knew who their adoptive parents were when they came to visit them the first time.

Participant #1 said that her daughter had her confused with someone else and thought the agency representative was her new mother.

Participant #2 said that the entire experience was traumatizing for her daughter. Not only did she not know who she was, but she spent the entire time literally shaking because she was so terrified. To make matters worse, she found out later that her daughter had pretty much confined to a small, tiny room during most of her two years at the orphanage and so the trip to the visiting room was one of her first trips outside of her normal space.

As for pickup, due to the lack of communications only older children were aware that they were leaving to go somewhere else. The majority did not know or remember their adoptive parents from the first trip, which resulted in a traumatic and less-than-ideal experience.

## **Updates were sparse and not detailed.**

Often the time period between the first and second trip can span four to seven months. Pretty much everyone agreed that updates needed to be more frequent. Whatever updates were available generally required a fee up front, and unfortunately they contained only a handful of information.

## **Medical files were either unavailable or inaccurate.**

Considering the fact that the majority of children available for adoption from Bulgaria have special needs, the absence of accurate medical paperwork is very frustrating. Participant #1 never received any medical paperwork in spite of the fact that her daughter did not have any legs. For myself, my son's paperwork was actually a copy of someone else's chart. Other parents discovered their child's medical condition was something other than what was noted on their medical file. For example, one survey participant learned afterwards their son was legally deaf.

The reason why this is so important is that because without information, you are literally starting from ground zero (as if you just gave birth), effectively delaying attachment because you're spending all your time catching up for what you don't know.

## **Child profiles, including photos and background information, were unavailable.**

Baby pictures are part of society. But as adoptive parents, baby pictures are the one thing we never have. We also don't have anything that resembles a baby book, or a list of developmental achievements (first steps, first tooth, first word, etc), or any information about what makes our kids "tick."

Participant #2 saw a baby picture in her child's file, but for some reason they refused to give it to her.

## **Agency workers did not visit the children during the waiting period to ensure they were being taken care of.**

This seemed to be the case for most all of the children. Unfortunately, there were reports of situations where child abuse and/or death resulted between the two trips. Doing periodic checkups would have allowed in-country personnel to intervene beforehand.

## **Children were abused and neglected, resulting in delays in their transition, development and attachment.**

Participant #2 said she wished the orphanage staff would have simply treated her daughter like a human being. Instead, she was treated like a leper



# RESULTS & FINDINGS

and confined to a small room for most of her young life.

Reports of abuse and neglect are common. Children are often tied to their cribs. Corporal punishment is used to keep children in line. Older children are told stories of monsters and being eaten if they get out of bed at night.

Special needs children are often treated differently from able-bodied children. Able-bodied children are typically in foster care, while special needs children are typically housed in orphanages. Stories of how able-bodied children had good food and clothing, while the special needs children bordered on starvation and wore rags are not uncommon.

Older children learn to “buck the system” and develop disruptive attachments with their caregivers. Both participants stated that attachment with their older children (age 6) had been challenging as they often view their caregivers--and later their adoptive parents--as a simple way to get what they want instead of developing true, loving relationships.

**No amount of education and preparation would have been sufficient.**

All study participants went to extreme lengths to prepare themselves for adopting.

They attended classes and seminars, read books and blogs, joined adoption support groups, researched adoption agencies, spoke with adoption specialists, connected with other adoptive families, educated themselves on their child’s culture, took language lessons, met up with local Bulgarians in their community, sampled ethnic foods, and adopted new cultural holidays. Yet, in spite of all this preparation, it wasn’t enough.

Participant #2 said that if people realized it was so hard they wouldn’t do it. Another survey participant stated it would be helpful to partner new adoptive families with older, more experienced families to help them make the transition successfully.

It would be good to find additional participants who have adopted more recently and from foster care to see if the situation has improved. According to Participant #1, who works for a U.S.-based adoption agency, there has been some improvement, but it remains a perilous situation for special needs children.

That said, everyone was satisfied with their decision to adopt, and they would recommend adoption to others.

## Attachment Themes

**THEME #1:** In the adoption process, the children involved typically have absolutely no idea who the prospective adoptive parents are, thus impeding attachment. No one has told them what’s going on, and they are completely unaware of their adoptive parents’ existence until they show up. It is not uncommon for the first interaction to be traumatic and frightening to the children.

### Intervening Questions and Action Statements

**How can U.S. adoption agencies better facilitate first connections between prospective adoptive parents and their children?**

- We will develop profiles for adoptive parents. These profiles will contain photos and videos that can be shown to the children.
- We will develop a tool that will allow adoptive parents to create and send pictures, videos, and messages to their children.
- We will create a process that will facilitate the sending of care packages from adoptive parents to their children.

**How can third parties in country intervene on the behalf of prospective adoptive parents to provide those first connections to their children?**

- We will create relationships with third parties, such as missionaries, business people, babas (grandmothers), etc.
- We will create a process to allow these third parties to mediate the delivery of

care packages from adoptive parents to their children.

- We will create a process whereby these third parties can periodically visit the children and serve as an intermediary between the adoptive parents and their children.

**How can in-country adoption representatives work with foster parents and orphanage staff to ensure some sort of contact between prospective adoptive parents and their children prior to their arrival?**

- We will create a tool that will allow in-country adoption representatives to show the adoptive parents’ profiles to the children.
- We will create a tool that will allow in-country adoption representatives to create and send videos/messages from the children to the adoptive parents.
- We will create a process whereby in-country adoption representatives can work with third parties to facilitate communication between adoptive parents and their children.



# Attachment Themes

**THEME #2:** There is often little to no contact between adoptive parents and their children between trips (usually a time period of 4-8 months), including updates on how their children are doing. This causes a lot of angst for adoptive parents while they wait. It also impedes attachment as the children are unaware of what’s going on, and if they’re older, they may wonder if the parents are coming back.

## Intervening Questions and Action Statements

**What processes can U.S. adoption agencies put into place to ensure adoptive parents are able to stay in contact with their children while waiting?**

- We will create a process where adoption agencies provide adoptive parents with regular, monthly updates on their children.
- We will create a formal process where adoption agencies can contact in-country adoption representatives and other personnel to obtain regular updates.
- We will put adoptive parents in contact with other parents who have/are traveling to the same orphanage in order to get more personal information on their children.

**How can adoptive parents employ third parties in country to provide opportunities for contact with their children?**

- We will create a resource list of various third parties that can provide services to the children: babas, tutors, therapists, etc.
- We will create a registration process with the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice to ensure

- that third parties undergo any required safety and security checks.
- We will create a process where adoptive parents can browse this list and sign up for third party services.
  - We will create a process whereby adoptive parents can receive regular updates from these third parties and exchange information.

**What processes can in-country adoption representatives put into place to ensure routine checks are conducted for the children in their care?**

- We will create a tool whereby in-country adoption personnel will be able to electronically check in with foster parents/orphanage staff every week.
- We will create a process whereby in-country adoption personnel can schedule and conduct visits to the children once a month.
- We will create a tool that will allow in-country adoption representatives to exchange photos, videos and messages between children and their adoptive parents.

**THEME #3:** Adoptive parents typically receive little to no information about their children’s background and living conditions prior to adoption. This circumvents parents’ ability to provide the best care for their children and effectively delays the attachment process.

## Intervening Questions and Action Statements

**What processes can U.S. adoption agencies put into place to ensure that adoptive parents are better informed and prepared?**

- We will create a formal process whereby adoption agencies can contact in-country adoption representatives and other personnel to obtain any and all pertinent records.
- We will create a resource list of adoption doctors, therapists, speech clinics, and other adoption specialists.
- We will create a tool where adoptive parents can browse this list based on their geographic location and a child’s needs, and sign up for a pre-adoption assessment of their child.

**We will create a process whereby these specialists can contact adoption personnel with questions.**

- How can the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice better coordinate the process of getting accurate information on the children available for adoption?

- We will create a set of guidelines that govern the minimum amount of information that can be shared with adoptive parents.
- We will create a set of templates to facilitate the collection of background, medical, and other pertinent information in a usable manner.
- We will create penalties that will be imposed if these guidelines are not met in a satisfactory manner.

**How can in-country adoption representatives better the process of getting accurate information on the children in their care?**

- We will create relationships between in-country adoption representatives and foster parents and orphanage staff.
- We will create a process whereby in-country adoption personnel can respond to specialist inquiries and provide any necessary information.
- We will create a process whereby in-country adoption personnel can contact foster parents, orphanage staff, doctors, etc to obtain this type of information.

# DESIGN SOLUTION

**THEME #1:** In the adoption process, the children involved typically have absolutely no idea who the prospective adoptive parents are, thus impeding attachment. No one has told them what's going on, and they are completely unaware of their adoptive parents' existence until they show up. It is not uncommon for the first interaction to be traumatic and frightening to the children.

**Intervening Question:** How can third parties in country intervene on the behalf of prospective adoptive parents to provide those first connections to their children?

**Actionable Statement:** We will create a process to allow these third parties to mediate the delivery of care packages from adoptive parents to their children.

## Design Concept Description

The Bulgarian Love Patch is a third-party effort geared toward facilitating the sending of care packages from adoptive parents to their children. Parents can choose and purchase items via The Bulgarian Love Patch website. Care packages are fulfilled by local vendors in country, and delivered via charitable organizations to the child.

A care package is typically the first opportunity adoptive parents have to connect with their children. The goal is to provide items that can function as comfort objects to aid with parental attachment and child transition. All items are locally made in an effort to develop relationships with local vendors, and ultimately, are geared toward providing the children with a keepsake that they can take with them to their new life.

### Use of Comfort Objects

Most everyone knows someone whose child had a comfort or transitional object: a stuffed animal, blanket, or a pacifier. Perhaps the most famous example is Linus from Peanuts, who dragged his blanket everywhere he went.

Many child development experts believe having comfort objects is important (Schwartz, 2014). The strong attachment between the child and comfort

object enables them to feel safe when alone or frightened. Comfort objects can also help reduce a child's stress and anxiety and act as a conduit for healthy expression of their emotions (Women's and Children's Health Network, 2018).

The use of comfort objects in aiding attachment goes back to research by psychologist Harry Harlow. In the 1950s and 1960s, Harlow conducted a series of questionable and unethical experiments with rhesus monkeys, in which rhesus babies were separated from their mothers and fed via a stand-in "mother." When given a choice between a wire monkey that provided nourishment and a terry-cloth version that replicated the feel of the mother, the rhesus babies always chose the terry cloth version. Harlow observed that the terry cloth version functioned as a replacement for the mother, to the point where the babies would cuddle with it or go to it when frightened (Cherry, 2018).

This result became even more profound in subsequent experiments. Babies raised with only the wire monkey experienced heightened anxiety and extreme aggressiveness, further illustrating the importance of attachment in a child's life (Ackerman, 2018).

In a more recent study of 83 three-year-olds, doctors Richard Passmen and Care Eisenberg from the Milwaukee Medical Clinic found that "if

the child was attached to a security blanket, then it served as a useful substitute for a mother and helped the child get through the exam with little distress." (Schwartz, 2014)

### Comfort Objects and Adoption

When asked, participants stated that their adopted children did not have comfort objects. Typically, all they bring with them is themselves: they leave the orphanage with whatever the parents brought for them and nothing else. As a result of their experience, many children come home with poor sensory and regulatory control and exhibit what are called orphanage behaviors: rocking, pulling their hair, head banging, or hitting themselves or others. (Gindis, 2012)

The focus of this design solution is not only to provide first connections between the adoptive parents and child, but more importantly, to provide these children with comfort objects earlier in the process. This will help give the children something similar to what was experienced by the rhesus babies: the possibility to attach to a replacement--something that can provide comfort during their days in the orphanage and on their way to their new home and life.



COLEEN SALLOT

NAME/TAGLINE: The Bulgarian Love Patch: “Building families one patch at a time”

CONCEPT DESCRIPTION: A third-party effort geared toward facilitating the sending of care packages from adoptive parents to their children. Parents can choose and purchase items via The Bulgarian Love Patch website. Care packages are fulfilled by local vendors in country, and delivered via charitable organizations to the child.

CORE PURPOSE: A care package is typically the first opportunity adoptive parents have to connect with their children. The goal is to provide items that can function as comfort objects to aid with parental attachment and child transition. All items are locally made in an effort to develop relationships with local vendors, and ultimately, are geared toward providing the children with a keepsake that they can take with them to their new life.

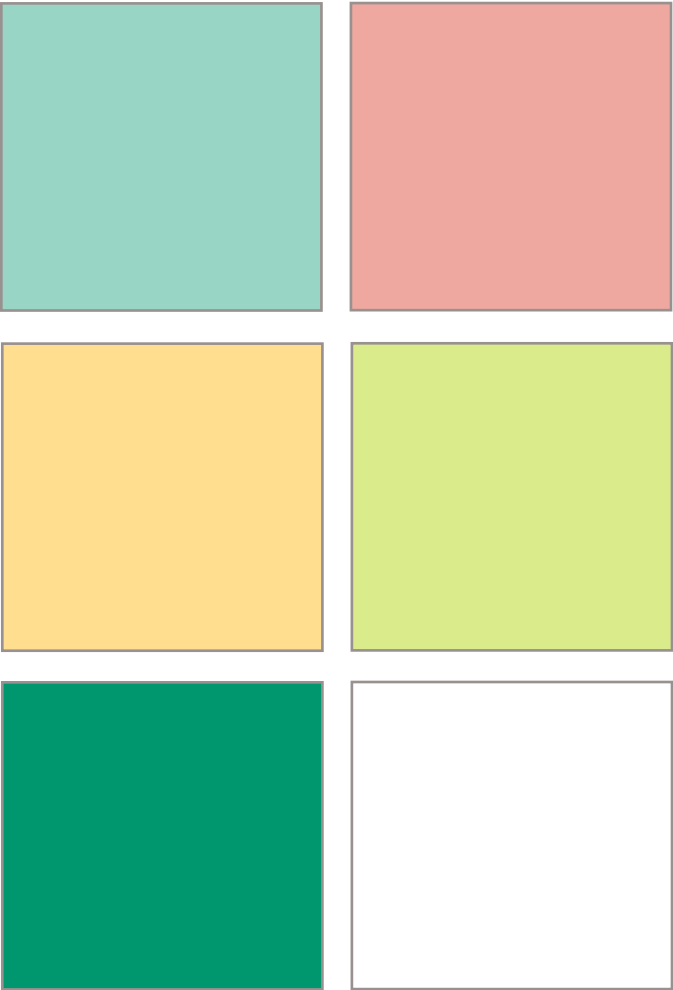
PHOTOGRAPHY



SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS, DIAGRAMS, RULES



COLOR



TYPOGRAPHY

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TEXTURES





# Logo and Website Design



# The Problem

The adoption process is a long journey, often spanning several years. For the adoptive parents, meeting their child for the first time is a joyous occasion, akin to a dream that is finally coming true. However, most children have no idea who these strangers are or why they're there, resulting in a traumatic and terrifying experience.

Sending a care package beforehand might help with this problem. Care packages typically consist of what are known as "comfort items," such as a blanket or stuffed animal, which can aid in parental attachment and provide comfort during an adopted child's transition home.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way for an adoptive parent to send a care package to their child in Bulgaria.

- There are no third parties who can facilitate this process.
- Parents are responsible for purchasing items and shipping the care package
- Shipping a box from the United States to Bulgaria is expensive and time-consuming.
- Sometimes the care package gets caught up in customs.
- Sometimes the care package gets lost in the mail.
- There is no way to determine if the package is actually delivered.
- Often the package gets diverted and never makes it to the child.
- Often the package is never opened.
- Often half or most items are missing upon child pickup.

# Proposed Design Solution

The proposal is to create a third party solution, for the moment called "The Bulgarian Love Patch," which will focus on facilitating the sending of care packages between adoptive parents and their children:

- Care packages will originate in Bulgaria to save on shipping costs and also provide a cultural tie to the items that are available.
- The Bulgarian Love Patch will create relationships with local vendors, possibly utilizing Etsy as a storefront.
- Items available will include "comfort items," such as blankets and stuffed animals/dolls, as well as toy cars for boys, photo albums, books, clothing, and so on.
- Photo albums will include translated captions so caregivers can understand what each picture is for and relay that information to the child.
- Some stuffed animals will be recordable so parents can have their voice recorded.
- A disposable camera will allow foster parents/orphanage staff to take pictures of their child.
- Parents can include a personal letter or card that will be translated and read to the child.
- Collections based on gender, season, and holiday will be available for quick and easy ordering.
- The Bulgarian Love Patch will allow parents to order items via Etsy or a personal website.
- All items will be shipped to a third party within Bulgaria, who will create a nice gift basket for the child.
- These third parties will consist of personnel within local charitable organizations and/or in-country adoption staff.
- The Bulgarian Love Patch will focus on developing relationships between these third parties and the foster parents/orphanage staff.
- These third parties will deliver the care packages personally to the child's location.
- To help with delivery, all care packages will include a gift for the foster parent or orphanage staff.
- Third parties will send updates to The Bulgarian Love Patch regarding package delivery and with any notes from the children and/or orphanage staff.

## Partnerships with Local Vendors

- Create list of vendors who reside in Bulgaria.
- Create relationships with local vendors.
- Utilize storefront on etsy.com.
- Work with local vendors to expand business and provide services as a discount.
- Website contains different items from different vendors.
- Goal is to shop once, pay once, and ship everything at one time.
- Everything is shipped to a third party in Bulgaria, who puts the care package together and personally delivers the care package to the child.

## Bulgarian Etsy Vendors

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| • The Vintage Gallery 77 | • Happy Creatures Store |
| • Baby Max Studio        | • ZuzuHappyToys         |
| • Kate Nikolova          | • Moniminiart           |
| • Pepo Raia              | • HMReny                |
| • Wool Story Studio      | • Tanyas Bunny Tots     |
| • Shushulka Baby         | • Artpoint              |
| • My Winter Knitting     | • Handmade by Dobрева   |
| • Partylota              | • Kuche Marka           |
| • La Petite Maison Shop  | • Petya Twinkles        |
| • Various Toys           |                         |

## Partnerships with Local Charities

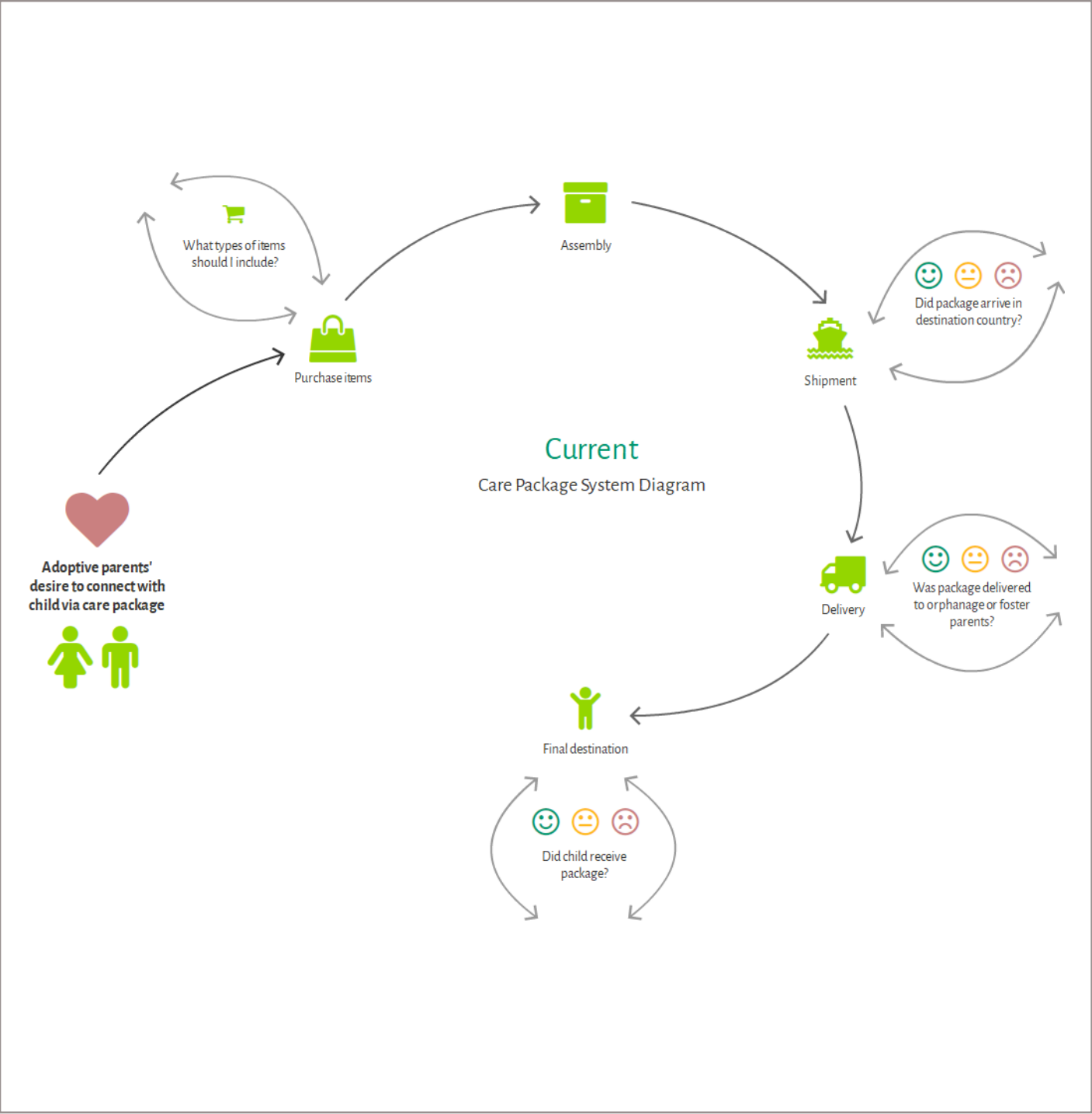
- Create list of charitable organizations who work with orphaned children in Bulgaria.
- Create partnerships to facilitate the creation and delivery of care packages.
- See how The Bulgarian Love Patch can help these organizations in their own causes, such as purchasing diapers, formula, and clothing for the children in the orphanages.

## Charitable Organizations in Bulgaria

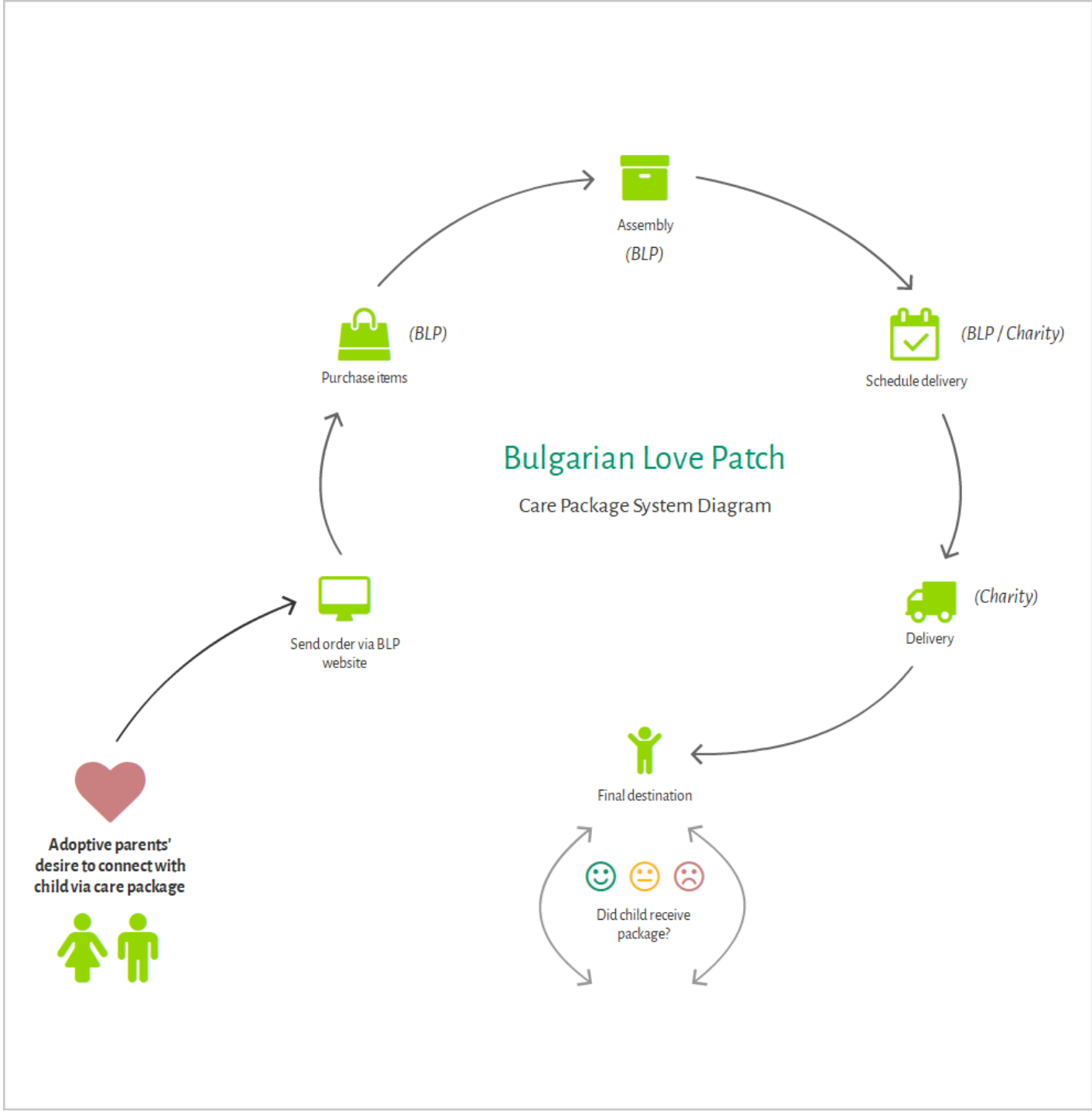
- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| • Transform Europe Network (TEN)        | • Milostiv                           |
| • One Heart Bulgaria                    | • Bulgarian Partners                 |
| • Hope and Homes                        | • Light for Bulgaria                 |
| • All God's Children International      | • Friends of Bulgaria                |
| • SOS Children's Villages International | • Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation |
| • Cedar Foundation                      |                                      |

# System Diagram

## Current System

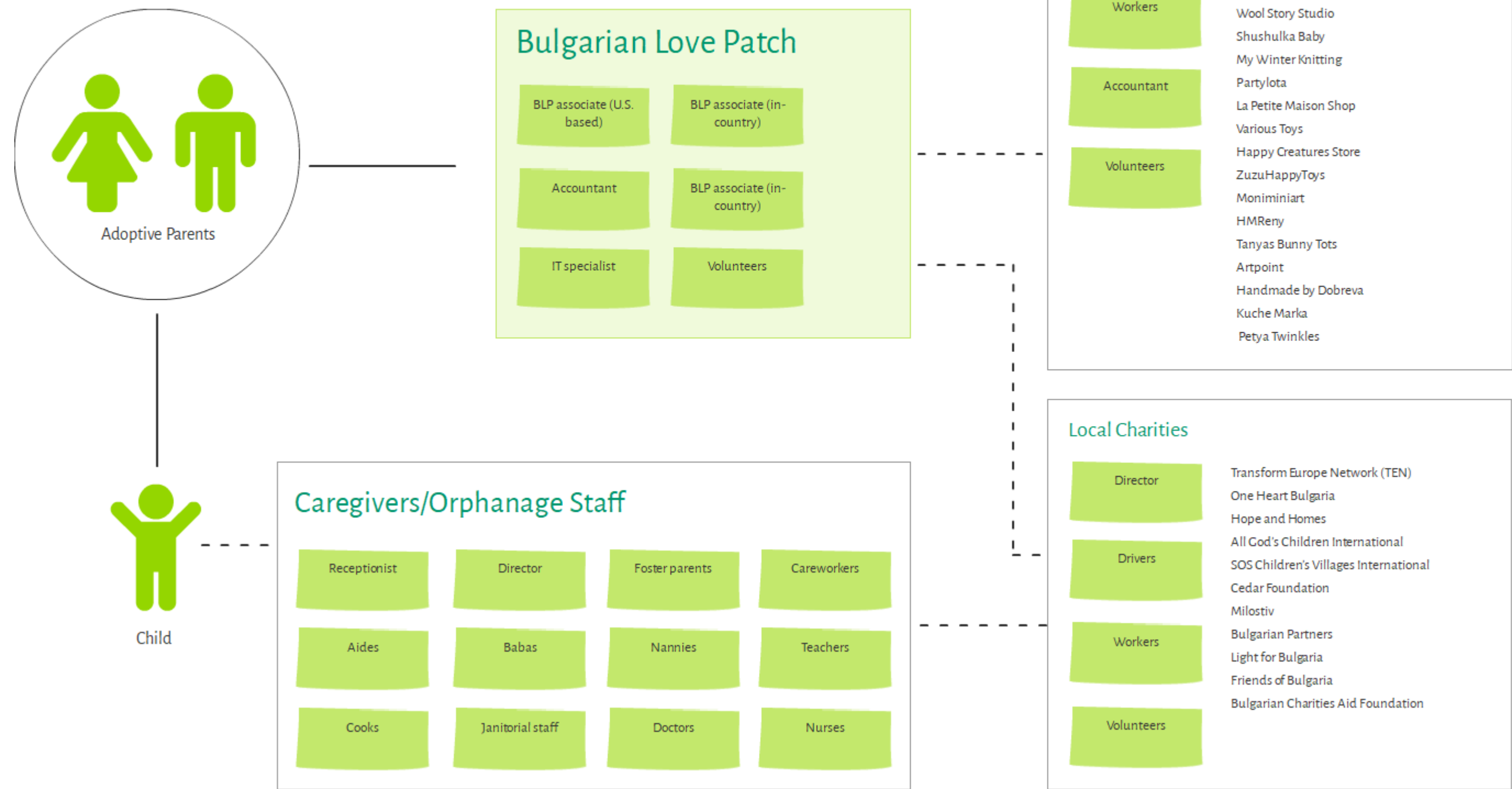


## Proposed System





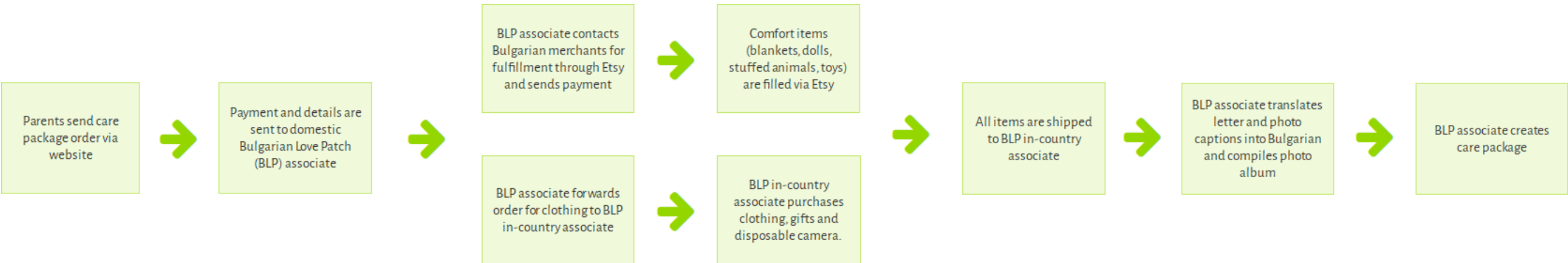
# Bulgarian Love Patch Social Network



# Bulgarian Love Patch Process Flow - Typical Care Package (MVP)

A variety of care packages, based on gender, age and season, will be available. The primary focus of these care packages is to provide comfort items to the child and an early connection to his or her parents-to-be. The typical package process will allow orders to be taken through the website, which will then be processed and fulfilled by a US-based Bulgarian Love Patch representative.

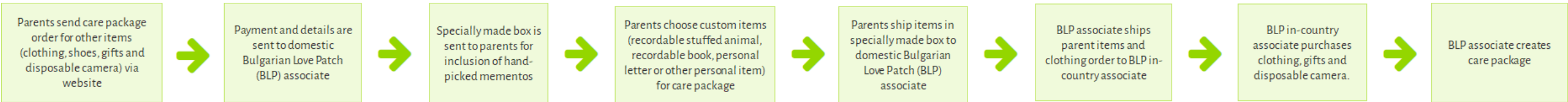
## Order and Fulfillment



# Bulgarian Love Patch Process Flow - Gotcha Care Package (MVP)

The Gotcha Care Package, the last care package sent prior to pickup, will function differently. While the other care packages will focus on providing the child with comfort items, the Gotcha Care Package focuses on providing a deeper connection between the adoptive parents and child. Here the parents can send sentimental items, such as a recordable book or stuffed animal, personal letter or other personal item, directly to a US-based Bulgarian Love Patch representative, who will in turn make sure those items and the parents’ order are sent to an in-country associate for fulfillment and delivery.

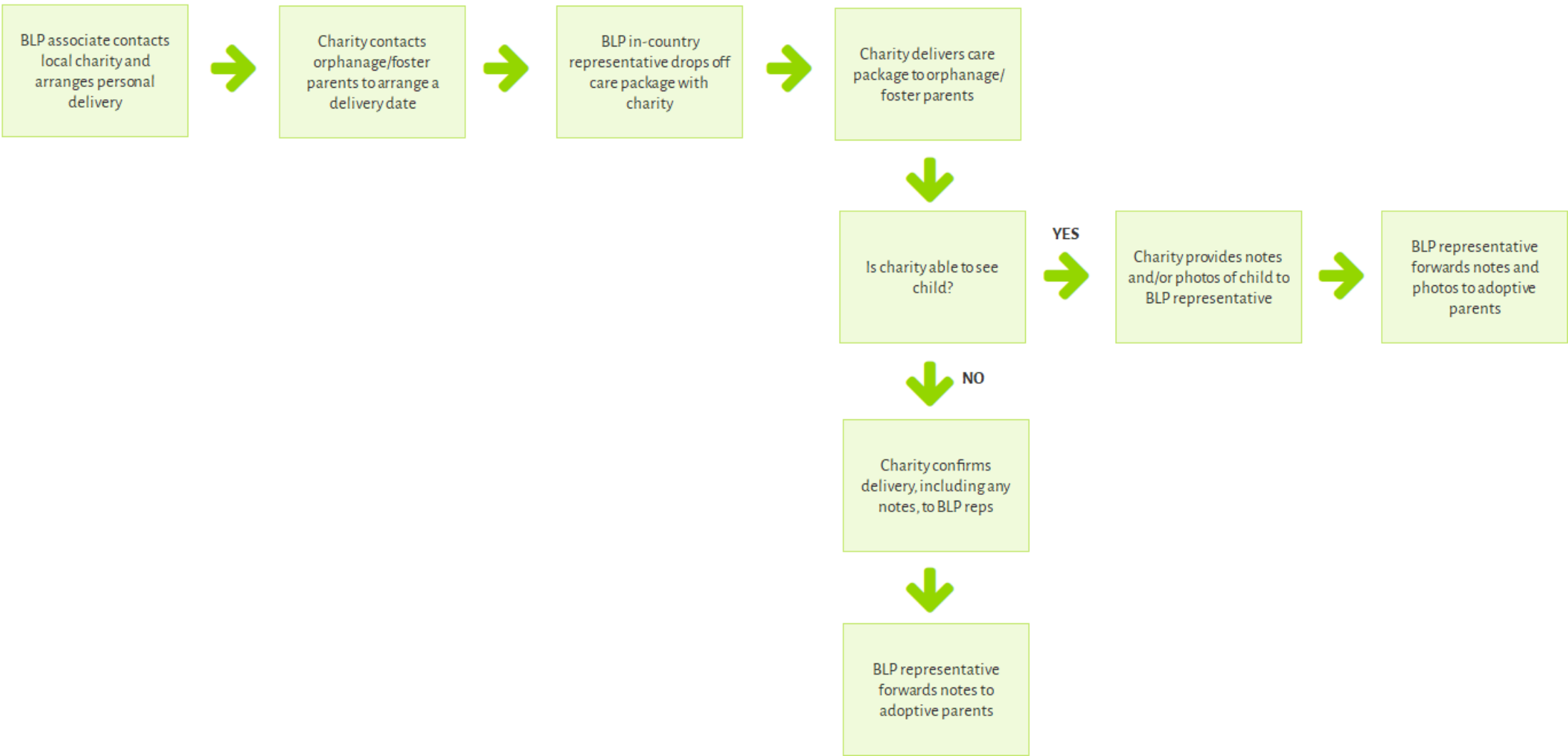
## Order and Fulfillment



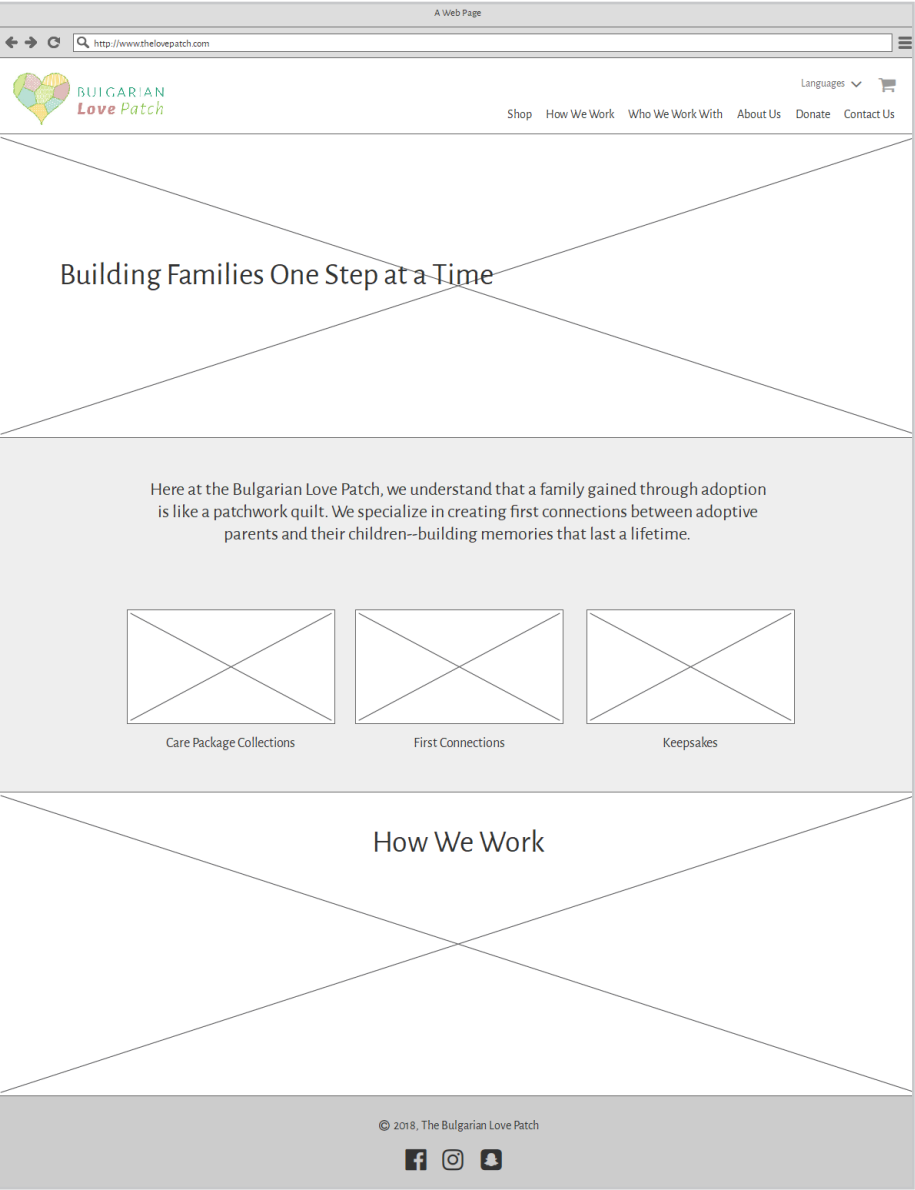


# Bulgarian Love Patch Process Flow (MVP)

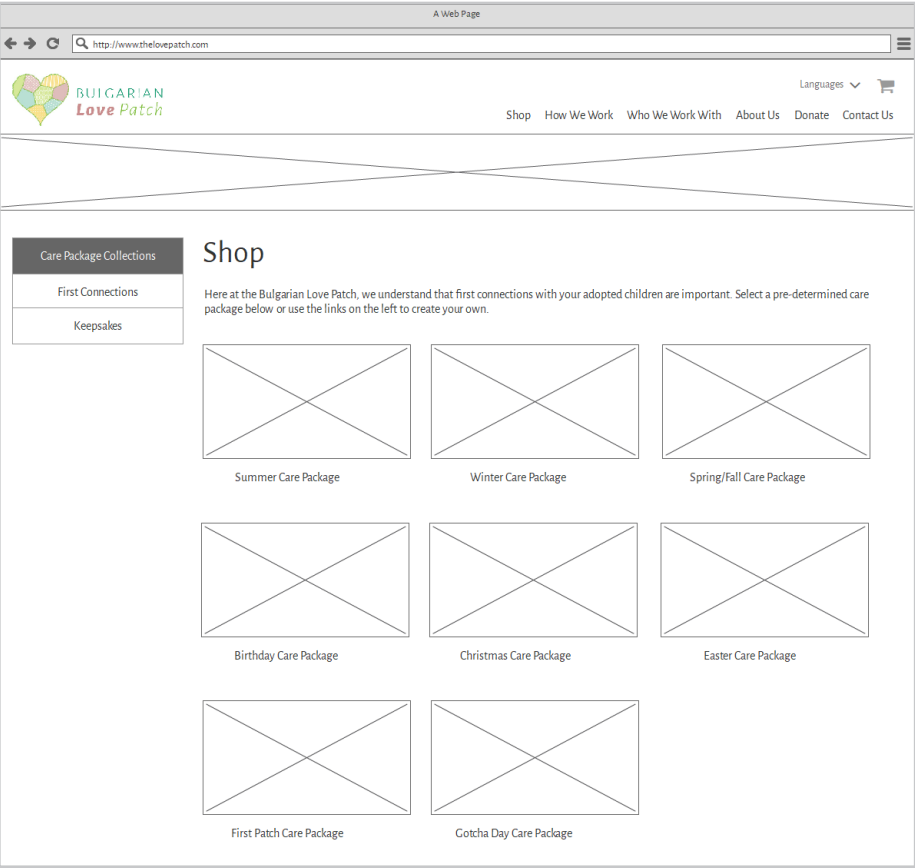
## Delivery and Updates



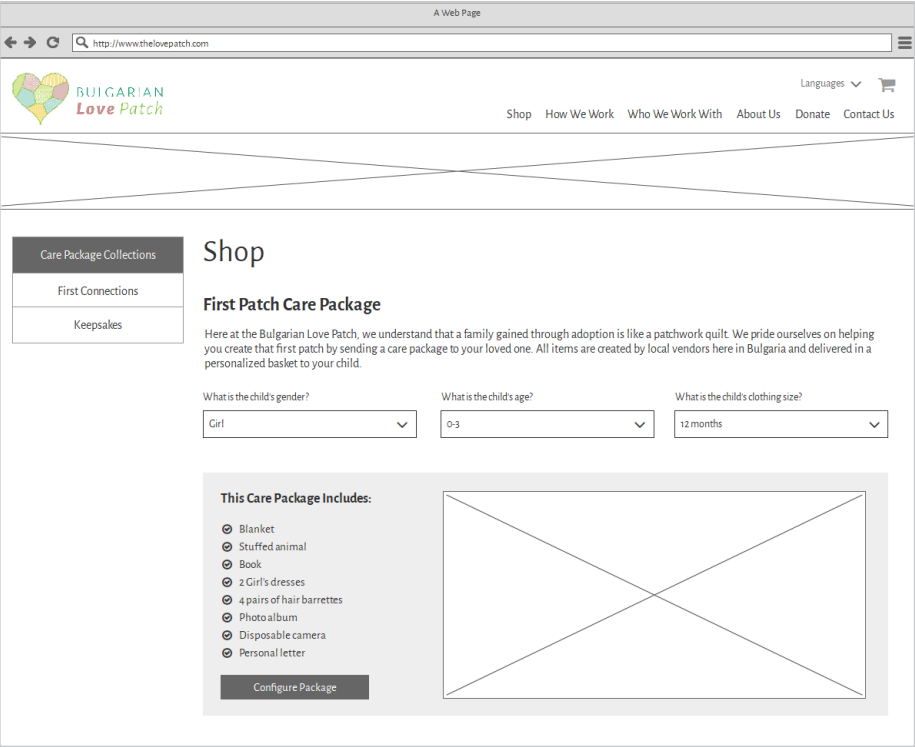
# Website Wireframes



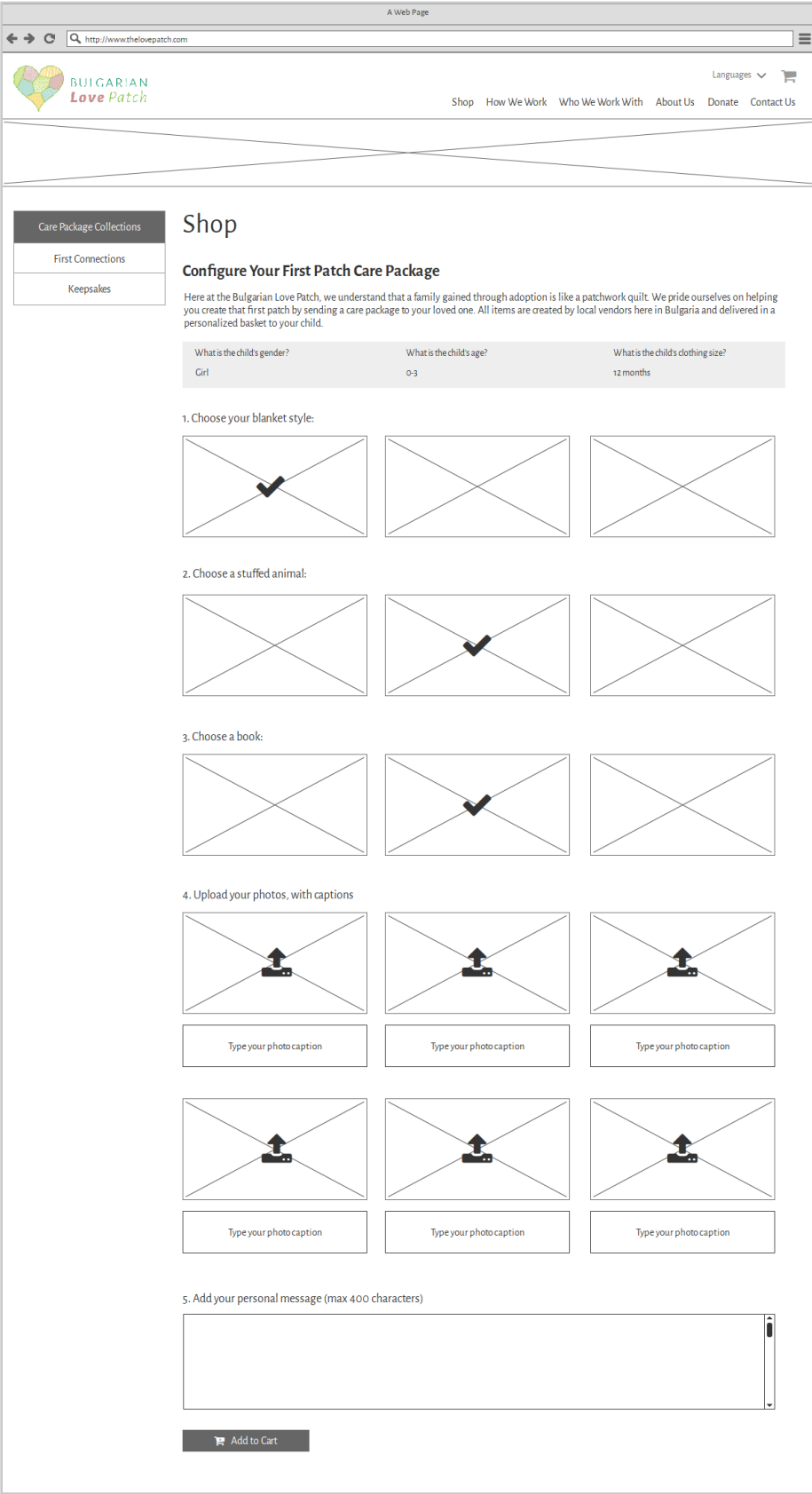
Home Page



Care Package Collections page

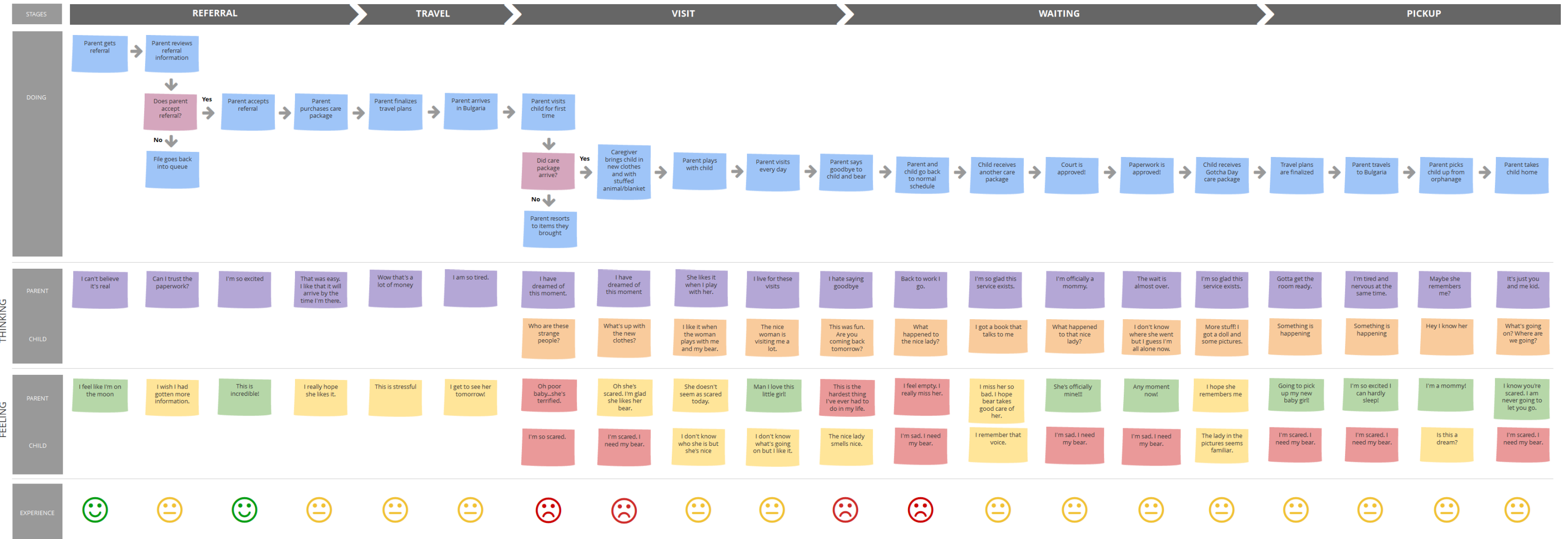


First Patch Care Package Selection



First Patch Care Package Configuration

## Adoptive Parent/Child Experience Diagram





## CONCLUSION

This study provided valuable insight into adoptive parents' initial experiences when adopting their Bulgarian children. It became obvious that there are huge barriers that prohibit contact between the parents and the children during the adoption process. There are also issues, such as the lack of medical or background information, that hinder parents' ability to properly care for their children, thereby delaying attachment.

The role of attachment in a young child's life is pivotal. As evidenced by Harlow's experiments and post-orphanage behavior in adopted children, attachment is critical to one's development and later success in life.

It is the hope of this project that providing care package services—and ultimately the ability to provide comfort objects for all children in orphanages and foster care—will be a small step toward fostering attachment in these families.

The project would benefit from additional research with newer families who have adopted from foster care. According to Participant #1, who works for a U.S.-based adoption agency, there has been some improvement, but it is still a perilous situation for special needs children. This would allow the solution to evolve and change to better fit either situation.

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# APPENDIX