

## ***When Choosing an Adoption Resource (#10)***

The following questions will help you evaluate the services offered by adoption agencies, adoption facilitators, or lawyers:

- ❑ Is the adoption agency registered with the Department of Social Services in your state?
- ❑ Check with the Department of Social Services to see if there are any formal complaints on record against the agency.
- ❑ What types of adoption does the agency offer? What is the agency's position on open adoption?
- ❑ What services does the agency offer to prospective adoptive parents, and do the services differ with the type of adoption chosen? Does the agency have pre-adoption and post-adoption support groups or post-adoption play groups?
- ❑ What are the waiting periods for an intake interview, homestudy/family assessment, placement with a child, post-placement services, finalization?
- ❑ What is the agency's experience with adoption disruptions and how much money is refundable?
- ❑ Are healthy children available? What ages are the children? May you request that a child of a particular sex be placed with you?
- ❑ Will the agency work with other agencies out of state? What states will they work with?
- ❑ Does the agency (or the countries that you are considering) have restrictions for prospective adoptive parents, and if so what are the restrictions? Do they work with applicants who are single, non-traditional, unmarried, married but previously divorced? Are there requirements about race, religion, chronic illness, physical challenges, etc.? Will the agency work with families that have a biological, adopted, or step child or children at home? What is the agency's philosophy on working parents? Can there be smokers in the home?
- ❑ What are the itemized fees for services for the adoptive parents? What type of fee scale is used? Are there set fees with a contract? What are the itemized birthparent fees (where applicable) that are the responsibility of the adoptive parents? Does the agency request additional monies for "donations," legal costs or additional medical tests for the child?

### **INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION QUESTIONS**

- ❑ What is the current availability of children? What countries or orphanages does the agency work with? Are the sources of children in good standing with the United States Embassy in that country? How many children has the agency placed in the last year or six months?
- ❑ How are parental rights severed?
- ❑ What is the average age of the child at placement and arrival?
- ❑ What medical information is available on the child, and where is that information from? If additional medical tests are required who is financially responsible for the tests?
- ❑ At what point does the adoptive parent's financial responsibility begin?
- ❑ Does the agency offer escort service to the US? If travel to a country is necessary, does the agency have

representatives in that country to assist with the paperwork, courts, housing, etc.? What is the average length of stay in the country? What is the average cost to stay in the country?

## IDENTIFIED ADOPTION QUESTIONS

- ❑ How long has the identified/private adoption program been active? How many placements has the agency made in the last 12 months? Who locates and finds the birthparents? How long does it usually take?
- ❑ What adoption agencies and what states do they use to find birthparents? Are search expenses billed to the client or shared by a pool of clients seeking to do an identified adoption?
- ❑ Is counseling required for birthparents? Who is the provider? Who pays for that service? How often is the office/agency in contact with the birthparent?
- ❑ What methods are used to locate the birthfather? What are the legal requirements for conducting a birthparent search in the state where the birthfather is believed to reside? What types of services are offered to birthfathers?
- ❑ Is drug screening required for the birthmother/father? Are periodic unannounced drug screening tests done?
- ❑ Where is the birthmother sent for obstetrical care? Does the agency help the birthmother apply for medicaid if she has no insurance?
- ❑ Are legal contracts used for the birthmother, birthfather and prospective adoptive couples? (Ask to see a sample).
- ❑ If the adoption occurs in another state, what are the state adoption laws and interstate compact requirements concerning residency, and time periods for signing and revoking consents and terminating parental rights?
- ❑ What amount of contact is required between the birthparents and the prospective adoptive parents?
- ❑ What is the cost of services? Is there a payment plan? If there is a disruption of the adoption process, what portion of the fee is refundable?

## ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO ASK AN ADOPTION LAWYER

- ❑ Verify that the lawyer is licensed with the Department of Social Services or the Lawyer Regulation Unit in your state.
- ❑ Ask the Department of Social Services and the Lawyer Regulation Unit if there are any pending or previous lawsuits against the attorney.
- ❑ How long has the lawyer been offering legal advice concerning adoption?
- ❑ How many adoption cases has the lawyer processed within the last twelve months?
- ❑ Does the lawyer have legal contacts in other states if needed?
- ❑ Are there clients who have used their legal services that would be willing to speak with prospective adoptive parents?

## BE CONCERNED IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING HAPPEN

- ❑ The agency, facilitator, or lawyer fee is exorbitant. There should be an itemized bill submitted. A request is made for a large amount of money, beyond the retainer, before a birthparent is located.
- ❑ Little information about the birthparents' ethnic, medical, educational, and social backgrounds are given. The attorney, agency, or facilitator does not stay in contact with the birthparents on an ongoing basis.
- ❑ No one from the agency or lawyer's office is present when the first meeting of the birthparents and the prospective adoptive parent(s) occurs.

## ADOPTION RESOURCES:

- The Adoption Education Institute: 646-366-0833; [www.adoptioneducation.org](http://www.adoptioneducation.org)
- American Academy of Adoption Attorneys: 202-832-2222; [www.adoptionattorneys.org](http://www.adoptionattorneys.org)
- The Center for Adoption Support and Education, Inc.: 301-593-9200; [www.adoptionsupport.org](http://www.adoptionsupport.org)
- Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute: 212-269-5080; [www.adoptioninstitute.org](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org)
- The Joint Council of International Children's Services: 202-429-0400; [www.jcics.org](http://www.jcics.org)
- National Adoption Information Clearinghouse: 888-251-0075; [www.calib.com/naic/](http://www.calib.com/naic/)
- National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption: 248-443-7080; [www.spaulding.org](http://www.spaulding.org)
- Wednesday's Child Program: [www.freddiemacfoundation.org](http://www.freddiemacfoundation.org); [www.adopt.org/wednesdayschild](http://www.adopt.org/wednesdayschild)
- Adoption Advocates of America: [www.theadoptionguide.com/advocate.htm](http://www.theadoptionguide.com/advocate.htm)
- National Adoption Foundation: [www.nafadopt.org](http://www.nafadopt.org)
- National Adoption Center: 1-800-TO-ADOPT; [www.nac.adopt.org](http://www.nac.adopt.org)
- Casey Family Programs: 206-282-7300; [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)
- National Council for Adoption: 202-328-1200; [www.adoptioncouncil.org](http://www.adoptioncouncil.org)

## ADOPTION SUPPORT:

- Adoption.com: [www.adoption.com](http://www.adoption.com)
- Adoptive Families of America: 800-372-3300; [www.adoptivefamilies.org](http://www.adoptivefamilies.org)
- Adoption Professionals.com: [www.adoptionprofessionals.com](http://www.adoptionprofessionals.com)
- Council on Adoptable Children: 212-475-0222; [www.coac.org](http://www.coac.org)
- North American Council on Adoptable Children: 651-644-3036; [www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org)
- PACT, An Adoption Alliance: 415-221-6957; [www.pactadopt.org](http://www.pactadopt.org)
- Adopting.com: [www.adopting.com](http://www.adopting.com)
- Adopting.org: [www.adopting.org](http://www.adopting.org)

*Further information on this topic is available through RESOLVE fact sheets. For a publications order form, go online to [www.resolve.org](http://www.resolve.org). You can also contact RESOLVE Headquarters at 1760 Old Meadow Rd, Ste 500, McLean, VA 22102 or 703.556.7172.*

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