

# Adoption Options

## Selecting the Right Agency to Build Your Family

### RESOURCES

Kingdom Kids - 509.465.3520

www.kingdomkidsadoption.org

Idaho Foster Care and Adoption Programs

800.926.2588

www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov

Northwest Adoption Exchange - 800.927.9411

www.nwae.org

*Adoption is a personal journey and it's important to choose an agency you're comfortable with to assist you.*



Photography By Annette Wren

**C**HOOSING TO ADOPT A child is a momentous decision, but it's only the first of many that you'll have to make as your adoption moves forward.

The next big choice is whether to adopt domestically or internationally. While international adoptions more often make the news, domestic adoptions are vastly more common.

If you decide to adopt domestically, you'll need to hire an agency to guide you through the process.

You'll be trusting this agency to help you bring home a new son or daughter, so be sure to choose one that will accomplish this task quickly, efficiently, sensitively, and ethically.

Adoption is a very personal journey and it's important to choose an agency you're comfortable with to assist you down that path. Here are some questions to help you narrow your search:

*Can we continue pursuing fertility treatments?*

Some agencies will specifically state you are not to be undergoing fertility treatments during the process of adoption. Other agencies don't have this requirement.

*Can we specify our preference for a boy or girl?*

There are agencies that will allow you to wait for a specific gender, while others don't permit you to specify.

*What is the ratio of adoptive parents to birth mothers?*

This ratio will help you estimate how quickly you'll be selected by or placed with a birth mother and child. For example, if there are 100 prospective adoptive couples to 50 birth mothers registered with the agency, you have a 50 percent chance of being able to adopt quickly.

*How does the agency locate birth mothers?*

Ask whether birth moms contact the agency, or whether the agency has a marketing program to attract birth mothers.

*What is the average wait time from application approval to placement?*

Agencies vary on how long the average wait time for parents is, and couples vary on how long a wait is acceptable. Make sure you choose an agency whose stated wait time

is within your comfort zone.

### *What kind of support do you offer adoptive parents and birth mothers?*

The needs of adoptive parents and birth mothers are very different. Look for an agency that has separate personnel with specific training to provide support for all parties involved in an adoption.

### *Does the birth mother select parents or are children placed by the agency?*

The process is very different in each case. If you're going to be selected by the birth mom, you have to put together marketing materials - letters and photos about yourself and your family. In this case, your wait is indeterminate, depending on how well you've presented yourself as prospective parents.

If children are placed by the agency, the process is more like getting in line—you'll be matched with a baby when it's your turn. Most domestic agencies now lean towards letting the birth mothers choose.

### *What criteria does the agency use to match birth mothers with adoptive parents?*

When you sign with most agencies, you'll be given a checklist to indicate what you find acceptable. The birth mother also receives a checklist. You may decide, for instance, that you aren't willing to adopt from a birth mother who is addicted to drugs, but you don't mind if she drank coffee or caffeinated sodas throughout pregnancy. The birth mother might not want her child raised by a single parent, or may prefer a family that already has children at home. The agency uses these

checklists to help make a match.

### *Does the agency charge one set price or are the fees "a la carte?"*

Agencies that charge a fixed price generally charge a higher fee, but you'll know up front what your costs will be. The fee will cover the entire process, including another match if one birth mom changes her mind before the adoption. But if you're working with an agency that charges per service and the birth mom changes her mind, you'll have to pay to start over again. You can save money by paying per service if everything goes smoothly, but it's a bit of a gamble.

### *Can you handle open, closed or semi-closed adoptions?*

This is a matter of agency policy, and determines whether or not you'll be obligated to communicate with the birth mother after the adoption is final. In a closed adoption, birth and adoptive parents do not know each other, and their identities are protected.

Semi-open adoptions allow the birth mom and adoptive family to exchange letters, usually through the adoption agency so that names and addresses can be concealed.

Open adoption means that birth moms and adoptive families know each other's names and addresses, and can make an agreement to stay in touch, frequently or infrequently, as the child grows up. You have to decide what your level of comfort is, and then find an agency to support it.

### *What protective and proactive*



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### *steps are taken to ensure the birth parents' rights are terminated?*

For obvious reasons you want to make sure that your agency doesn't cut any corners, and takes every legal step to make sure the adoption won't be challenged.

Ask about the agency's success record. Make sure that the agency has never had a child removed from a home after being placed for adoption because of loopholes that allowed a birth parent to reclaim the child. You should also check your home state's laws, since not all fifty states treat adoption equally. The rights of the birth father, for instance, vary widely among states.

Obviously all adoptive parents want to avoid the heartbreaking scenario of bringing a child home and growing deeply attached, only to have a birth parent come back to challenge the adoption. If your state's laws make you uncomfortable, you can choose to adopt in another state.

Doing your homework and asking all the right questions will help you bring home the child you've been dreaming of. And when your child joins your family, you'll realize that all the time and effort was well spent.