



EXPLORING ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE

Important Questions to Ask Agencies

These questions will give you an idea of the kind of things you need to be thinking about when selecting an agency. Some of these questions may get answered in an information meeting or on the agency website. Others you may need to ask.

Domestic Private Adoption Agencies

Experience and Philosophy

How many years have you been working in domestic adoption?

How many children did you place last year?

Are most of your placements open, semi-open, or closed?

If semi-open is most common, how is that defined?

What percentage of your families would you say experience at least one failed match due to a birth mother changing her mind?

Does your agency require a written agreement from adoptive parents committing to never use corporal punishment?

Finances

Can you provide a complete description and itemization of all fees?

Can you provide a timeline showing which fees are due at each stage of the process?

What is your refund policy?

Can you provide a copy of your contract?

Do you “pass through” birth parent medical expenses to adoptive families, or do you have a firm fee schedule at the time of application?

Resource and Equipping

How do you develop an adoption plan for both the adoptive parents and the birth parent(s)?

How do you handle the birth father's termination of parental rights in respect to the timing of presenting a child to the prospective adoptive parents?

Do you have social workers on staff who prepare home studies or can I have my own done?

What services are you going to provide for the birth parents?

What are your post-placement services? How long is post-adoption support provided?

Process

How soon can my home study be conducted after application is made?

After my home study and background check are complete, what is the typical length of time before placement?

How do you develop a birth family profile and how is it used?

Do you have any unique agency requirements?

What medical history and birth parent history will I receive?

Foster Care/Foster Care Adoption Agencies

Experience and Philosophy

How many years have you been working in foster care adoption?

How many children did you place last year?

What is a typical caseload for a case manager?

What is your philosophy regarding semi-open adoption arrangements between birth families and adoptive families or foster families?

What counties are you working in?

Process

Who will be conducting my home study?

What is your training and application requirements?

After my home study, training, and background check are complete, what is the typical length of time before placement?

Do you have any unique agency requirements?

What medical history and birth parent history will I receive?

For matched adoptions, how long are families typically waiting for a child? Why this wait time?

For matched adoptions, what processes do you have in place to identify children from CPS in need of permanency?

What kind of availability will my caseworker have? What is the typical turn-around time for emails and phone calls?

Support and Resources

What kind of support will be provided during a foster care placement?

If we are struggling with a placement, what support/training will the agency provide us?

What training and post-placement supervision and support do you offer?

International Adoption Agencies

Experience and Philosophy

How many years have you been working in international adoption?

Which countries do you work with, and how many placements did you make last year from each? How many years have you been placing children from each of these countries?

Are your overseas staff contract employees who work with many agencies, or do they work only with you?

Does your agency require a promise never to use corporal punishment?

Do you subcontract with other agencies in countries where your agency is not certified?

Ethics

What is the process in which a child is identified by your agency/assigned to your agency?

What safeguards are in place to ensure that this child has not been trafficked and no longer has any family available to parent him/her?

Where are the children currently living (i.e. orphanage vs. foster care)?

How much money does the orphanage get per adoption? How does the process ensure that there is not motivation for child trafficking?

How are biological siblings identified and tracked?

Finances and Process

Do you have a complete description of all fees, including agency fees, translator fees (if applicable), donations, and various countries' fees?

If the country I apply to changes its rules and I become disqualified, can I switch to another country? How difficult is that process?

Can you provide a copy of your contract?

Who will help me prepare my dossier?

After my dossier is complete, how long will I wait before placement?

If given a referral, will I get a written summary, photos, and/or a video?

If travel is involved, how long should I expect to be out of the country? Will my spouse and I both need to travel?

Do you have staff in country or who will be with us during our trip(s)?

Adapted from the Hope for Orphans If You Were Mine DVD Adoption Workshop Workbook. ©2008 FamilyLife®