



KNOX AREA FOSTER CARE & ADOPTION MINISTRIES

Suggested Questions for Adoption Agency Selection Process (Domestic Adoption)

The following is a list of suggested questions that are designed to help families in selecting an adoption agency for a domestic adoption. Use of an adoption agency is only one of several different means of pursuing adoption, but is a commonly used and often beneficial approach for many families. A very important consideration in selecting an agency is determining whether the agency is a “good fit,” and this can generally be achieved by ensuring that the family has accurate information and realistic expectations about the agency, its services and costs and its adoption process. In addition to obtaining answers to the following questions, adoptive families are strongly encouraged to read carefully any contracts or policies that they are asked to sign or agree to by the agency and to ask questions (including consulting an attorney, if necessary).

General Questions About the Agency:

- What are the agency’s requirements for adoptive families (e.g., age, marital status, number of children already in the home, religious, criminal background, financial, health considerations)?
- How long has the agency been licensed in Tennessee? How long has the agency been in operation?
- Is the agency a non-profit or for-profit organization? If a for-profit organization, who owns the agency?
- Does the agency have any religious or denominational affiliation?
- How long has the agency’s director been working in the adoption field? How long has he/she been the director of the agency?
- How many professionals are on staff with the agency? What is the average length of service at the agency for the agency’s case workers who are currently on staff?
- What is the education and licensing background of the agency’s director and professional staff?
- Will the agency provide contact with families who have recently used the agency to adopt (i.e., family references)?
- Are families allowed to specify the gender of the child they wish to adopt?
- Who handles the agency’s legal work? Is the attorney a member of the American Academy of Adoption Attorneys?

Questions About Fees and Costs:

- What fees and costs are charged by the agency in connection with the adoption process and when are they due?
- What costs and expenses will likely be incurred in addition to the agency’s fees and costs (i.e., home study expenses, legal expenses, filing and processing expenses, etc.)? *Note: It is advisable that you request a total estimate for all fees, costs and expenses that can be expected in connection with the adoption process – not just the agency’s fees and costs.*

Questions About Wait Time:

- What is the current estimated wait time for families? How many families are currently waiting? *Note: Wait times at most agencies are often highly dependent on the adoptive family's parameters (e.g., age, gender, racial/ethnic and health factors that the adoptive family is willing to consider). To the extent that an adoptive family has already determined certain of its fundamental parameters, questions regarding wait times should be asked in specific relation to those parameters (e.g., what is the estimated wait time for an infant girl).*
- What is the longest wait time for any of the families that are currently waiting?
- Have average wait times for families increased, decreased or remained generally the same over the past several years (and if they have increased or decreased, why)?
- How often should I expect to hear from the agency workers during the waiting process?

Questions About the Agency's Previous Placement Experience:

- How many children has the agency placed in each of the past five years?
- What is the general break-down along racial and ethnic lines of the agency's placements in the last several years? Has the agency experienced any noticeable trends regarding the race or ethnicity of children placed in the last several years (i.e., an increase or decrease in the number of placements of children of a certain race or ethnicity)?
- What number of failed adoption placements has the agency experienced in each of the past five years (i.e., how many instances of a family being matched with a child but such match did not result in a final adoption)?
- How does the agency handle failed placements (e.g., where on the wait list is a family that has experienced a failed placement placed, are there are any additional fees or costs imposed, etc.)?

Questions About the Agency's Matching and Placement Process:

- What information does the adoptive family know about birthparent(s) and vice versa? How does the agency define terms such as "open" adoption and "semi-open" adoption?
- What degree of ongoing contact and/or communication between birthparent(s) and adoptive family/child does the agency require, promote or allow?
- What role does the agency play in facilitating ongoing contact and/or communication between birthparent(s) and adoptive family/child?
- How does the agency's matching process work? How are birthparents and adoptive parents matched?
- If adopting an infant, how involved is the adoptive family with the birthparent(s) prior to the baby being born?
- If adopting a newborn, when is the baby generally placed with the adoptive family?

Questions About Services Provided by the Agency:

- What pre-placement training does the agency offer to adoptive families? What other support services does the agency provide (e.g., support groups, social events, newsletters, etc.)?
- What post-placement services for adoptive families are provided? What help or services are available for adoptive families experiencing post-placement challenges and difficulties relating to their adoption?
- What counseling and support services do the birthparent(s) receive both prior to and after the adoption?

Disclaimer: This document is not intended to constitute, nor does it represent, legal advice of any kind. A qualified attorney should be consulted with respect to any legal questions or issues.