

~ New Beginnings – Newborn & Infant ~

Adoption Program

Openness in Adoption-

Does ICA facilitate open and closed adoptions?

As an agency our first priority is the emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical well-being of all parties participating in any adoption (i.e., adoptive parents, birthparents, adoptive child). We find that this goal is best achieved only through open adoption types and we are more than happy to discuss the many benefits of an open adoption with prospective adoptive families that may be concerned.

What are some of the benefits of choosing an open adoption?

Open adoptions are a wonderful way to encourage and support the future of the adoptive child as well as the birthparents. By choosing an open adoption you not only set the birthparents at rest as to the well-being of the adoptive child, but also ensure access to important information such as birth family background and medical history. Such knowledge strengthens the child rearing process by celebrating and providing valuable connections, relationships, and answers as well as alleviating any concerns that may arise. Open adoptions are also evaluated on a case-by-case basis, meaning that during the home study process, your social worker will develop the details of your adoption agreement with the birth family according to what you are comfortable with and in the best interest of all parties involved. You will work together with your social worker to determine what you envision as far as your relationship with the birth parents before birth, during the hospital stay, and after placement of the adoptive child in your home.

What kind of, or how much, contact should I expect in an open adoption?

The great thing about open adoptions are that they are “open”! This means that the degree of contact and communication varies greatly from case-to-case depending on characteristics surrounding the adoption and personalities of adoptive parents and birth parents alike. Some families maintain contact strictly through ICA, while others enjoy pictures and emails regularly as well as occasional visits. We recommend that you speak with other families or support groups in your community that have open adoptions to get a good idea of the variety available, or visit www.childwelfare.gov online to review articles pertaining to open adoptions. We would also be happy to connect you with one of ICA's adoptive families to speak with if you so desire. Remember, during the home study process your social worker will help you with expectations and developing a comfortable plan for your family.

How You are Matched-

When does the matching process begin?

At ICA we hope to begin the matching process with prospective birth parents as soon as possible. That's why we work with you to complete all your paperwork, your social worker visits, and complete your home study and your family profile so that we may begin.

What kind of adoptive families are birthparents usually looking for?

Birthparents consider various criteria depending on their own personality and circumstances. Some of their common considerations in selecting adoptive families' are: number of persons in the immediate family, marital status, age of parents, personality, ethnicity, religion, and adoption type or degree of contact desired.

Can I set specific margins for adoption before my profile is shown to birthparents?

Yes, you will complete an adoption interest checklist, a special needs checklist, as part of your paperwork, as well as determine the type of adoption plan that you desire for you and your family. However, it is important to note that the more open and flexible you are in regards to the child's gender, ethnicity, exposure to drugs and/or alcohol/tobacco, and future birthparent contact, the greater your opportunity is of being matched or selected.

How often will my profile be shown to birthparents?

As often as possible, since adoptive families are chosen by the birthparents, there is no waiting list. It is important to note that ICA does not generally inform the adoptive family when their profile is being shown. There are various different reasons for this but it is mostly to protect the adoptive families from distress during the matching process and many times birthparents are not ready to make a decision until further along in the pregnancy. You will not be left out of the loop, however, and many times you will be contacted by your social worker to discuss unique birthparent situations and your options. We also encourage our adoptive families to join in the matching process by posting their adoptive information on specialized websites and listings.

What should I do if we are matched with birthparents from a different source?

Please contact your ICA social worker as soon as possible to discuss the specifics of your situation and the best course of action in continuing the adoption.

What should I expect if the birthparents want to meet with us?

Your social worker will be with you every step of the way. She will contact you and recommend a neutral location, which is often times a restaurant, coffee shop or the ICA office, and give you advice on a small gift to bring according to the birthparents personality and needs. She will also apprise you on the birthparents specific situation and things to discuss as well as not to discuss. This is a time for both you and the birthparents to be introduced and get to know each other.

What happens if we live out of state?

Many families adopt out-of-state, this is called an Interstate Adoption. Your ICA social worker will work hard to facilitate between you and the birthparents via email and phone calls. Like all interstate adoptions the adoptive family will have to travel to the child's state of birth for the delivery, and possibly before delivery in order to meet the birthparents in person. This is something to take into consideration before choosing to participate in this type of adoption.

Counseling and Other Birthparent Services-

How do birthparents come in contact with ICA?

Birthparents are usually referred to ICA through various resources including: hospitals, shelters, churches, crisis pregnancy centers, friends, and family members. Some birthparents find ICA online or by phone listings. In some cases adoptive families have already been chosen by birthparents through mutual contacts and come to ICA to further facilitate the adoption.

Is it mostly newborns that are placed through this type of private adoption?

Yes, although in some rare cases older children are placed.

What kind of counseling services does ICA offer the birthmother?

At ICA the well being of all parties involved in an adoption is very important. That is why we require that birthmothers attend no less than 3 counseling sessions. They will also meet no less than twice with their ICA social worker before the delivery of the child as well as once after the birth to complete the relinquishment paperwork and counsel with the birthmother.

Does ICA generally do birthmother drug/alcohol testing before they are matched with adoptive families?

No, although birthmothers are usually honest about their drug/alcohol involvement and history. Your ICA social worker will discuss these issues and possible outcomes with you before you decide whether or not to proceed.

How much information do adoptive families receive about the birthparents?

As much as possible. Birthparents are given paperwork to fill out in regards to their medical/social and family history, as well as medical release forms. Once the child is placed in your home you will have access to this information as well as receive the child's hospital records.

What should we expect at the hospital and for the delivery?

Your social worker will notify you of your birthmother's Hospital Plan. The Hospital Plan is decided by the birthmother and social worker before the birth of the child concerning her hospitalization and delivery. All details of her stay are predetermined; including everything from her hospital accommodations and interaction with the baby after delivery, to the adoptive parents' interaction with her and the baby during this time. Your social worker will discuss with you the specifics of your birthmother's Hospital Plan and help you make appropriate plans.

Should we bring the birthmother a gift while she is at the hospital?

Yes, it is a wonderful gesture to show that you care and appreciate her courage in this decision. Your social worker will discuss with you what kind of gift best fits the occasion.

When is the relinquishment signed and when can we bring the baby home?

The relinquishment can be signed by the birthparents anytime after she is medically discharged. Some birthparents choose to sign the relinquishment in the hospital after the delivery. The place and time of the signing is usually determined before delivery by the birthparents and ICA social worker. After the birthparents have signed the discharge paperwork and the baby is medically discharged from the hospital, you are free to bring the baby home.

If we are adopting from out-of-state (an Interstate Adoption) how long will we need to stay in the state of the child's birth before we can bring the baby home?

You will need to stay until the Interstate Compact paperwork is approved by both states which usually takes about a week.

Can the birthparents "change their mind" after the relinquishment has been signed about their decision to place the child for adoption?

If that's the option the birthmother chooses, according to California State Law the birthparents have a minimum of 24 hours to contact the agency and regain custody of the child. After this period has elapsed, your ICA social worker will file the relinquishment with the California Department of Social Services and the parental rights will be terminated. It is important to note that the presumed father, or birthfather that has exercised his parental rights

during the pregnancy, has the same rights as the birthmother. The alleged father, or birthfather who has not exercised his paternal rights during the pregnancy, has fewer rights; however, any birthfather must be notified of the adoption plan and have his rights terminated. After a period of 6 months ICA asks the adoptive family to complete an adoption or Finalization, at which point the adoptive parents are issued a Decree of Adoption by the local court. At this time the court will also order a new birth certificate for the child.

What financial assistance is available for prospective adoptive parents?

Most adoptive parents have asked this question and been pleasantly surprised at the amount of assistance available. Almost everyone who is willing to put forth the extra effort can find some type of financial assistance either through donations from family and friends, employer assistance, grants, or even low percentage rate loans. We would be happy to supply your family with our adoptive family Financial Assistance Resources list.

The Hope for Children Act makes an adoption tax credit and an exclusion from income of amounts provided through an employer adoption assistance program permanent law. This allows a tax credit for allowable expenses up to \$13,170 in adoptions that have not been completed through the Waiting Child Program. As of July 1, 2010 a \$13,170 tax credit for each adoption of a child with special needs. This also allows an exclusion from gross income of amounts up to \$13,170 for qualified adoption expenses for adoptions not completed through the Waiting Child Program or up to \$13,170 for adoptions of children with special needs paid by an employer to an employee through an adoption assistance program. This phases out the allowable amounts for both the credits and the exclusion between adjusted gross income of \$150,000 and \$190,000.

Other Resources to Look into

BirthMom Buds, www.birthmombuds.com
Child Welfare Information Gateway, www.childwelfare.gov
Tapestry Books, www.tapestrybooks.com
Adoption Learning Partners, www.adoptionlearningpartners.org
Adoptive Families Magazine, www.adoptivefamilies.org
Lifebooks, <http://www.adoptionlifebooks.com/>
American Academy of Adoption Attorneys (AAAA) www.adoptionattorneys.org
Academy of California Adoption Lawyers (ACAL) www.acal.org
Adoption Friendly Workplace, www.adoptionfriendlyworkplace.org
Cade Foundation www.cadefoundation.org
Gift of Adoption Fund, www.giftofadoption.org
God's Grace Adoption Ministry, www.ggam.org
Kingdom Kids Adoption Ministries; Adoption Fundraising Program, www.kingdomkidsadoption.org
Life International, www.lifeintl.org
MICAH Fund www.micahfund.org
National Adoption Fund, www.nafadopt.org
Shaohannah's Hope, www.shaohannahshope.org
A Child Waits Foundation, www.achildwaits.org
The ABBA Fund, www.abbafund.org
Hebrew Free Loan Association, www.hflasf.org
A Mother's Love, www.amotherslovefundraising.com
National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) www.nefe.org
National Military Family Association, <http://www.nmfa.org>

Please feel free to contact the ICA office at (951)695-3336 or email info@4achild.org with any additional questions you might have.