

Hallmarks of Ethical Adoption Practice

We believe the following are important considerations when choosing a facilitator to assist with an adoption:

The **GENERAL PHILOSOPHY** espoused by the facilitator and prospective adoptive parents is that children, in general, should be raised within their birth families. Adoption is an option only when the birth parent feels that his/her family is not a resource.

ETHICAL PREGNANCY COUNSELING explores all options available to birth parents – not just adoption. Even birth parents who strongly present adoption as the only option to consider must be challenged to look at parenting and/or raising the child within the family. Only then can adoption become a free choice.

Diligent attempts are made by the birth mother and facilitator to **IDENTIFY, LOCATE AND INVOLVE ALL POSSIBLE BIRTH FATHERS** in the counseling, decision making, planning, and legal process. Birth father and/or their families are a resource for the child whether the decision is parenting or adoption since they can provide social and medical information, which represents 50% of the child's heritage and identity.

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION is made available to adoptive and birth families. Topics such as the dynamics of denial, grief, shame, trust, and loss as related to all members of the adoption circle are the core curriculum as well as education regarding the lifelong process, unique challenges of adoptive parenting, relatedness of birth and adoptive families and the legal process.

Totally informed decisions about adoption cannot be made until birth parents have gone through the actual birth process. **A DECISION FOR ADOPTION IS ALWAYS MADE AT LEAST TWICE** – once during counseling and once when the child is born. Legal steps should not be taken until the birth parent has seen, held and named the child; recovered from the birth process; experienced a separation from the child; and has made an informed post-birth decision. Legal papers should be signed in front of a Judge to ensure that the birth parents' rights are protected and that they have full understanding of the finality of their decision. Birth parents and adoptive parents should have independent counsel to avoid conflict of interest if attorneys are involved.

BIRTH PARENT EXPENSES should be reasonable, itemized and accompanied by receipts. The element of coercion should not be even remotely possible. In most instances, fees should be kept to a minimum to remove the feeling of obligation by either party. An adoption decision must be made voluntarily with no strings attached.

POST ADOPTION SERVICES beyond finalization of the adoption should be provided by the facilitator for any members of the adoption circle throughout their lifetime. Experiencing the joys and sorrows of an adoption plan are lifelong emotions for birth families, adoptive families, and adoptees. If support services are not provided by the facilitator, referrals will be made to another service provider.