



WELCOME BOOK

INTRODUCTION TO THE ADOPTION ALLIANCE

The Adoption Alliance is a 501 C (3) Charitable Organization, which is licensed to place children for permanent adoption. The Agency is licensed in Texas, New York, and Connecticut. We are also authorized to place children in most other states. The Agency received its provisional license in January 1989 and its permanent license on January 13, 1990. We currently have two office locations; one in San Antonio, Texas and the second Iowa. The staff of The Adoption Alliance is very proud of all of the Agency's accomplishments since becoming licensed. Working with an experienced and professional agency provides valuable services for both adoptive and birth parents. We would love to help your family with the adoption process.

The Agency has worked with adoptive parents living throughout the continental United States and in several foreign countries. The Agency's goal is to build happy, functioning families and to assist all parties through the adoption process with professional, caring guidance.

Counseling for the birth parent(s) and their families is perhaps the most important service we provide. It is generally recognized that young women who receive counseling during their pregnancies are more apt to follow through with their adoption decision. In addition, you will have complete background and health information on your child as possible. The Adoption Alliance employs a hard working, knowledgeable, and caring staff with many years experience in adoption and our legal counsel are considered the best available. There will be many questions throughout the adoption process. Our staff welcomes any and all inquiries concerning the Agency, its policies or the rules and regulations governing adoptions in Texas.

GENERAL INFORMATION

During the adoptive parents initial contact The Adoption Alliance staff gathers general information. The Adoption Alliance staff does not believe long waiting lists are beneficial to anyone, and occasionally closes applications for this program. Upon return of the application and all required documentation to the Agency, the Agency will arrange or assist in arranging for a pre-adoptive Home Study.

The Director of Social Services must review and approve the application, supporting documents and Home Study. If the applicants are accepted as prospective adoptive parents, their adoption plan is discussed and they are advised of their status as "parents in waiting".

The following information has been compiled as a result of frequently asked questions. Everyone involved in an adoption plan understandably has many questions. If your questions are not answered in this packet, please call the Agency. Each adoption is handled on an individual basis and as mentioned no two adoptions are exactly alike. The Adoption Alliance staff will make this a special time for everyone involved.

Frequently asked Adoption Questions

What is the application fee?

\$500.00 (It is non-refundable.)

What is your agency fee?

\$16,000 and we locate the birth mother.

What documents are necessary in order to be approved by the agency?

All supporting documents, which include the application, home study, references, background checks, medical records, photos, and sometimes additional documents.

How much do the adoptive parents have to submit to the agency once they are approved?

Once the adoptive parents are approved, the non-refundable retainer of \$6,000 and an additional \$1,500 as a minimum account balance for the escrow account is due (total \$7,500).

How long is the average wait to adopt a child?

The *average* wait from the time the adoptive parents are approved as is approximately 12-18 months. However, the wait can be shorter, as it is the birth mother who selects the adoptive family for her child. An adoptive couple can also decrease their waiting period by being flexible and open to different situations; such as race of child, prenatal exposure to alcohol or drugs, etc. Please discuss the situations you may be comfortable with.

Do the adoptive parents have to talk to and meet the birth parents?

In most cases, the birth parents do want to talk to the adoptive parents during the pregnancy, as well as meet them. The agency primarily does "semi-open" adoptions, which means that identifying information is not shared with the birth parents. (In many cases this means that the birth parents will know the adoptive parents first names and the state in which they reside, but may not know their last names or the city in which they reside.) Semi-open adoptions do not include visits between the birth parents and child once the child has been placed in the adoptive parents' home. Once the child is placed with the adoptive parents, the adoptive parents send pictures and letters for the birth parents through the agency. This is done once per month for the first six months and annually on the child's birth date.

What are the birth parent relinquishment laws in Texas?

The birth mother cannot sign a relinquishment document until 48 hours after the birth in Texas. An unmarried birth father can sign prior to the birth, but his parental rights cannot be terminated until after the birth. A husband must also wait until 48 hours in Texas after the birth to sign a relinquishment document. Once the relinquishment document is signed, it is irrevocable.

What is the adoption law related to absent birth fathers in your state?

We must address a birth father's parental rights; even if the birth father is "unknown". Specific methods will be addressed on a case by case basis.

What if the birth parents decide to parent before the relinquishment is signed?

The adoptive parents are responsible for the funds which have already been expended pertaining to their match, but they do not lose the entire agency fee. (A case loss fee of \$1,000.00 is deducted from their account balance for the time spent on the case.) The agency cannot legally make the birth parents repay any of the support they had been given. The adoptive parents profile will be shown to new birth parents and another match will be made in the future.

Will the birth parents receive counseling?

The BPs will receive counseling during the adoption process. It remains available to them during their post-partum period as well.

What is the average cost of an adoption including BP support, legal fees, and agency fees?

The average total cost is approximately \$24,000 - \$28,000, but every case is different.

Do most of the birth mothers have Medicaid?

Most of the birth mothers are eligible for Medicaid, but must follow-through with a lengthy application process. The agency will assist them with this as much as possible. If the birth mother does not obtain Medicaid, the adoptive parents are responsible for all the medical expenses associated with their case.

Will the adoptive parents receive prenatal records during the pregnancy?

The agency will request prenatal records and forward them to the adoptive parents.

Can a single parent or gay parent adopt?

Non-traditional families can adopt through our Agency, but we also encourage all our families to locate a birth mother via their own advertising and/or networking.

How many families are waiting for a match at this time?

Our agency typically has 25 families waiting to be matched. We are constantly matching families and having new families "sign on", but the number of those waiting for a match remains rather consistent.

What if the adoptive parents should walk from an adoption case, are funds refundable?

If you decided not to proceed with a case once you had made a commitment you are responsible for all birth parent support expended to that point. Also the case loss fee of \$1,000.00 is deducted from your account to cover the time spent on that particular case. However, the balance of the agency fee and any other remaining funds on account are transferred to your next case with the agency.

Does your agency have any special requirements regarding adoption education?

The State of Texas regulations require adoptive parents to receive "adoption education". The agency meets this requirement by sending our "adoptive parents in waiting" informative adoption information. If the adoptive parents would like to seek more formal adoption education, they are welcome to do so.

How long is the Home Study good in Texas?

In Texas the home study needs to be updated every six months.

What happens if we turn down a situation? Are we put at the bottom of the list?

Nothing happens. We will continue showing your profile just as before. Remember the birth parents select the APs, we don't use a list system. All the APs are shown when appropriate.

Why types of adoption do you do?

All of our adoptions are domestic and a majority are semi-open. Although, we can do fully open adoptions if both parties agree to it. The Adoption Alliance's goal is to assist all parties of an adoption plan with the best services to meeting everyone's needs.

What happens if we decide not to adopt through your agency and we have already retained you? What will we lose?

The agency application fee and retainer are non refundable.