

BEGINNING THE ADOPTION PROCESS

“Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress.”

James 1:27

ADOPTION OPTIONS & TYPICAL COSTS:

- ◆ **International Adoption** (\$15,000-\$50,000)
- ◆ **Domestic Adoption** through an adoption agency (\$15,000-\$40,000)
- ◆ **Domestic Adoption** through a private adoption - where only a lawyer is involved between birth-mom and adoptive parents (cost for an attorney and potential medical costs of birth-mom. \$2,000-\$15,000)
- ◆ **Domestic Adoption** by adopting out of the foster care system (minimal costs- most covered by the state.)

RESEARCHING ADOPTION:

1. Talk to families who have adopted.

Their experience will be invaluable. If you are looking for reviews of specific agencies or countries, talk to families who have recently adopted, (within the last 2-3 years). Procedures and paperwork changes frequently with international adoptions.

2. Read about adoption by country: adoption.state.gov

3. Read specific agency reviews

- a. adoptionagencyreviews.com
- b. www.adoptionagencyratings.com

4. Talk to different agencies. Ask LOTS of questions.

- a. Compare country programs between agencies. If there are tremendous discrepancies between wait times or cost, ASK questions to find out why.
- b. Ask the agency for references of families who have adopted through them. Call or email those families.

ONLINE RESOURCES:

Read blogs. You can find families who are using an agency you are researching by googling blogs of adoptive families. Don't hesitate to email them to ask for their honest opinions.

www.adoptuskids.org is a website that raises public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system and connects prospective adoptive families with waiting children around the country.

www.heartgalleryofamerica.org is a national website that lists children currently available for adoption out of the foster care system.

ADOPTION TERMINOLOGY

1. **Homestudy:** This is the paperwork that will confirm your family is suitable to adopt, either internationally or domestically. It will also indicate how many children you can adopt and what ages you are open to adopting. The homestudy will take place by an agency in the state where you live. You do NOT need to use an agency in state for the actual adoption. In the homestudy you will probably need to include:

- a. **Birth and Marriage Certificates**
- b. **Fingerprints**
- c. **Child Abuse and Neglect form (CAN form)**
- d. **Medical History**
- e. **Household finances**
- f. **Autobiographies of both parents**
- g. **Work Verification letters**

2. **Dossier:** This is for international adoption. It is the paperwork required by the specific country from which you are adopting. It will differ by country. Some dossiers contain very little paperwork, while others are very intensive.

3. **Hague Convention:** An international agreement to safeguard children in intercountry adoptions. Not all countries abide by the Hague Convention. For more information go to: http://adoption.state.gov/hague_convention/overview.php

4. **Lifebook:** This can have a couple of meanings

a. For domestic adoption, it is often the book made by families who are hoping to adopt. A birth mom will view a scrapbook of the adoptive family's life and make her decision of who to place her child with based on the Lifebook.

b. For international adoptions, families often make Lifebooks for their adopted children, in hopes of filling in the gaps of the years before they were adopted. It is a way for the children to learn as much of their history as possible.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT ADOPTION:

- ◆ **The adoption process can be emotionally exhausting.** BOTH husband and wife have to be on board and excited about the process. You'll need each other to lean on when things get tough, emotional, and the wait gets long.
- ◆ **Not all agencies are ethical.** Even if an agency states it is a Christian agency, it does not guarantee that it will be an ethical agency. Again, ask lots of questions. Ask about how they are spending the adoption fees. Ask who is taking care of the children, and how they know the children up for adoption really are orphans. Unfortunately, in poorer countries, parents are paid to give up their children for international adoption.
- ◆ **When an agency gives you a time frame of completion of an adoption, it's not a guarantee.** Often the wait times increase while you are in process. Hold loosely to start to finish timelines.
- ◆ **Wait times are less for international children qualified with "special needs."** That can range from minor things, such as premature birth or eyes that need corrective surgery to heart conditions or children who are HIV positive. For domestic adoption, you will most likely wait longer for a Caucasian boy or girl, as opposed to a biracial or African American child.
- ◆ **There is a tax credit for families who adopt.** The amount credit can change year-to-year.