



Forever Families Through Adoption

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Agency Policies & Procedures for Adoptive Parents

- ❖ Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is committed to providing services as diligently as possible to all clients of the agency.
- ❖ The staff of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is sensitive to the unique needs of Adoptive Parents and birth families, and does its best to address these needs.
- ❖ The adoption process is clearly explained and reviewed with all clients of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.
- ❖ All provided paperwork must be completed by Adoptive Parents in a timely manner and the appropriate fees must be submitted with the paperwork or when billed.
- ❖ Adoptive Parents must retain the services of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. before work may commence. This includes the following:
 1. Initial overview of process and agency services via telephone, email, written materials or possibly free informational lecture-type meetings. Then...
 2. The review and execution of the Pre-Orientation Information Form submitted with the appropriate fee and color photo. And...
 3. Attendance at the required orientation meeting, where adoption/parent training begins. And...
 4. The review and execution of the Fee Agreement, and submission of the Fee Agreement to the agency with the appropriate fee. And...
 5. The review, execution, and submission of the Adoption Application Form to the agency to begin our relationship.
- ❖ Adoptive Parents are made aware of the inherent risks of the adoption process.
- ❖ Adoptive Parents are made aware of the policies and procedures of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.
- ❖ Adoptive Parents are made aware of the agency's policy prohibiting preferential treatment and the policy regarding acceptance of client donations/gifts.
- ❖ Adoptive Parents reserve the right to terminate the services of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. at any time as per the Fee Agreement.

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www.foreverfamiliesthroughadoption.org • adopt@foreverfamiliesthroughadoption.org

Board of Directors: Shelly Perlman Foster, *President* • Richard Cutler, *Treasurer* • Ryann Lyden, *Secretary*
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Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of utmost importance. No identifying information is disseminated by the agency unless the clients have signed an agreement stating that the agency has permission to provide this identifying information to any party related to their adoption.

Client Files

Each client has a case file. All correspondence regarding the Adoptive Parents adoption planning is carefully recorded and kept in their confidential file. This includes:

1. Any agency documents completed by the client
2. Notes of any telephone contact with the client
3. Any legal documents pertaining to their case
4. Any notes by a social worker regarding counseling or home study services
5. Home Studies
6. Any correspondence received or sent on the clients' behalf
7. Any documents or correspondence regarding a child
8. Any advertising efforts made by the clients

Orientation Meeting

All Adoptive Parents are required to attend an orientation meeting with an agency representative to ensure they fully understand what is required and expected of them during the adoption process. A pre-application/orientation session fee applies. At this meeting, the Adoptive Parents review the necessary steps in the adoption process. This includes what is expected of them and all paper work and procedures related to this process. Agency procedures are also reviewed at this meeting. In addition, examples of materials, such as the "Dear Birth Parent Letter", are provided.

All Adoptive Parents need to understand the emotional and mental stresses that can be part of the adoption process and that private counseling is available as per the Fee Agreement, if they choose to seek help. Should the Adoptive Parents have unresolved issues surrounding their infertility, they may also take steps to help resolve these issues through counseling at the agency.

Adoptive Parents are encouraged to ask any questions they may have about the adoption process.

Fee Agreement

The Fee Agreement is provided and carefully reviewed at the orientation meeting. This includes discussion about any anticipated fees that may occur as a result of the adoption process and a review of the agency's refund policy. Adoptive Parents need to understand that work will not begin on their case until this agreement is read, understood, executed, and in the possession of an agency representative. In addition, adoptive parents need to understand that the Fee Agreement is a binding legal agreement and Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. reserves the right to collect from the clients any unpaid fees to the agency. This Agreement explains, in detail, all services by and fees charged by the agency

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Adoption Application

All Adoptive Parents must complete the agency's Adoption Application Form provided during the orientation meeting and discussed with an agency representative. Adoptive Parents are asked to review the Application carefully and to complete the entire Application. They are given the opportunity to bring the Application home and return it to the office with payment, when they are ready to proceed.

Client Expenses Account

Each client of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is required to deposit funds into the agency client expenses account so that Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is able to submit payment directly to outside offices when services are rendered in connection with their adoption proceeding. The Fee Agreement provides, in detail, the purpose of the client expenses account.

Home Study

A Pre-Placement Home Study must be completed and FFTA ensures that the process fully complies with State and Hague Convention regulations. The Adoptive Parents and/or any child or other household member will be interviewed by a social worker from the agency at least once in their home. This is to ensure that the Adoptive Parents are in fact ready and able to adopt. During the home study FFTA reviews the adoption process in detail to ensure the prospective Adoptive Parents' full understanding. Discussions include reasons for adoption, the needs of children available for adoption, concerns or questions about the process, the psychological issues that surround adoption, the impact on the family, and characteristics of the applicants including age, health, marital status, fertility, family composition and other topics. In compliance with state and federal regulations, applicants are asked for references, medical reports, child abuse clearances and criminal history. New York State requires FFTA to conduct both criminal and child abuse clearances on prospective adoptive parents, even when they have been pre-certified by a court or have had a home study completed by an outside agency or private social worker. The Social Worker will complete a report in accordance with New York State law.

A Post-Placement Home Study will also be conducted after the placement of a child in the Adoptive Parent's home. The same procedure is followed as the pre-placement report. Extra copies of the report are available upon request for a nominal fee. Fees for these services are charged to the Adoptive Parents as set forth in the Fee Agreement.

Adoption / Parent Training

Adoptive Parents are required by FFTA to complete a minimum of ten (10) hours of adoption/parent training as strongly suggested by NY State regulations and mandated by the Hague Treaty on International Adoption. FFTA will provide a list of suggested topics and available resources for completing such training. The training may include attendance at conferences or workshops (APC, Ametz/JCCA, JCICS, IACC, NYCCC, NACAC), Infant CPR course, reviewing books, online courses, movies etc. No more than half of the training hours can be taken using computer/on-line training programs. Adoptive Parents are responsible for contracting with other service providers directly and must provide certificates or other proof of course attendance/completion for FFTA to approve and to ensure that all approved parents have received the appropriate adoption/parent training.

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FFTA is aware that families adopting internationally have different Hague requirements. We will share with the Adoptive Parents a checklist of International issues and those required by Hague.

Advertising

The Adoptive Parents work with an agency representative in their networking efforts. This includes completion of a "Dear Birth Parent Letter." Examples of this Letter are made available to the Adoptive Parents during the orientation meeting. The agency representative is responsible for assisting the Adoptive Parents with the format of the letter (pictures, text, paper type, etc.). In addition, the agency representative proofreads and reviews the drafts of the letter. However, it is the primary responsibility of the Adoptive Parents to complete and print/bind this Letter. If they choose, the Adoptive Parents may also make coordinating "business"/adoption cards to be mailed to various offices.

In addition, websites and internet advertising are discussed and materials with information about this process are provided to the Adoptive Parents.

Also, the Adoptive Parents are requested to have a toll-free (800#) installed in their home in order to respond to Birth Parents who are answering the Adoptive Parent's ads and interested in communicating. Details regarding this procedure are given to the adoptive applicants during the Pre-Application meeting.

Ultimately, the Adoptive Parents are in control of what advertising strategies they would prefer to utilize for networking. However, it is the responsibility of the agency representative to suggest the best possible technique for networking using their judgment and past experiences with advertising.

Adoptive Parents are given the option to have ads placed directly by FFTA and to have their toll free (800#) answered by agency staff. This serves to make the Adoptive Parents feel more comfortable speaking with the Birth Parents, as the Birth Parents will have previously been screened by agency staff. The fees charged for this additional service are set forth in the Fee Agreement.

Counseling Services

The Adoptive Parents are made aware of their option to seek additional counseling at any time during the adoption process.

Should they choose to utilize these services, they will be billed for the meetings on their statements.

These services are available via support group or on an individual basis.

Should a referral need to be made, FFTA takes the following steps:

1. Discuss the option of referral with the client and that the referral is in the client's best interest stating reasons for such a referral.
2. Give the client the name and address and telephone number of the agency or person they are being referred to.
3. Call the referral to inform them that the referral for their services is being made on behalf of a client.
4. Follow-up with both the client and the agency or person the client was referred to.
5. Write a report for the file which includes all of the above.

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Legal Services

The Adoptive Parents are made aware of their need to retain separate counsel for finalization. If appropriate and/or necessary, the staff of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will also make appearances in Court. The Fee agreement contains all fees associated with the legal services provided by Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. (i.e. Termination of Birth Parent’s Rights, Criminal Clearances, ICPC, etc.). The Fee Agreement also describes fees associated with possible Pre/Post Adoption Extraordinary Services such as, but not limited to, Hearings / Contested Adoptions / Appeals / Due Diligence Searches.

Contact with Birth Parents (Pre and Post-Placement)

Unless the Adoptive Parents and Birth Parents are communicating on their own, there are three options to use the services of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.:

- 1) Face-To-Face Meeting with the Birth Parents using an agency social worker serving as a mediator. The social worker prepares a report on the meeting to include in the file.
- 2) Telephone Meeting with the Birth Parents that might include an agency social worker to serve as a mediator. The social worker writes a report on the conversation and includes it in the file.
- 3) Contact in Writing through letters, photos and information about each party (pre-placement) and letters (post placement).

All of the above must be arranged through Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.

Confidentiality is very important. No identifying information will be available unless approved by the party whose information is to be released.

All contact, correspondence, and meetings are carefully recorded in detail and kept in the client files. Any correspondence between the Birth Parents and Adoptive Parents after the placement of a child must be agreed upon by the two parties. Both parties are asked to execute an agreement which sets forth the terms and conditions of any post-placement contact between the parties.

I have received and reviewed this document.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date