

AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR EXPECTANT/BIRTH PARENTS

- Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. (FFTA) is committed to providing quality services for any Expectant/Birth Parent(s) that comes to the agency for the purpose of planning for their child.
- These services may include medical, social, and casework services regarding pregnancy options. Services also include extensive counseling regarding alternatives to an adoption plan, such as parenting the child, maternal or paternal relatives taking custody or guardianship. Many options and potential plans are explored with the Birth Parent(s).
- All services are provided with the recognition of each person's inherent dignity, integrity and right to privacy.
- The staff of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. are sensitive to the unique needs of Expectant/Birth Parents, and strive to address these needs.
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance. Unless otherwise agreed to, all information remains confidential.
- The adoption process is clearly explained and reviewed with all clients of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.
- The best interest of the child is always the priority while FFTA assists in making decisions regarding plans and services.
- Clients are made aware of the policies and procedures of the agency as set forth in this document.
- Each client has his/her own case file with records that are kept confidential.
- Sensitivity to the individual needs of each client of the agency is paramount.

Expectant/Birth Parents & Planning

The Expectant/Birth Parents must be active participants in the decision making process regarding the future of their child.

Respecting the Expectant/Birth Parents' decision is the most important factor of the planning process and in determining what is in the best interest of the child.

Should Expectant/Birth parent(s) choose an adoption plan, that Expectant/Birth Parent has the right to be an active participant in the plan. The first step in an adoption plan necessitates that the Expectant/Birth Parent terminate her (and, if possible, his) rights as the child's parent. This can be done by the Birth/Expectant Parent signing a surrender document. Expectant/Birth Parent(s) are given the option of either surrendering their parental rights in court, which is irrevocable, or out-of-court which becomes irrevocable after (30) thirty days. Expectant/Birth Parents are further advised that if they revoke an out-of-court surrender this does not mean that the Expectant/Birth Parent(s) will automatically get their child back but rather the judge determines through a hearing what is in the best interest of the child. In either situation counseling is offered.

Appointments with Expectant/Birth Parents

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. provides Expectant/Birth Parents with support by phone and/or by regular appointments, as needed. FFTA makes every effort to ensure that any appointment made with Expectant/Birth Parent(s) is kept. If an appointment needs to be rescheduled, the Expectant/Birth Parent(s) are notified within 24-48 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting and it will be rescheduled.

Should it be necessary and when possible, a representative from Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will make a home visit at the convenience of the Expectant/Birth Parent(s). FFTA maintains records/reports from all discussions performed whether by phone or in person meetings with Expectant/Birth Parent(s). In addition, any correspondence received from or sent to the Expectant/Birth Parent(s) is kept in their designated file.

Referrals and Services

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. assists Expectant/Birth Parents in locating medical care and prenatal services to help ensure the Birth Mother's health and the health of her unborn child. Should a referral need to be made to another agency or community service provider, FFTA will:

- keep a record of why the referral was necessary
- record to whom the referral was made
- contact the referral and arrange for the referral to contact the birth parent(s)
- make sure to give the birth parent(s) information about the referral
- follow-up with the referral

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. works with Expectant/Birth Parents in selecting adoptive parents for their child. FFTA provides Expectant/Birth Parent(s) with prospective adoptive parent information and support during the selection process.

FFTA arranges for payment of the Birth Mother's pregnancy related expenses when needed and as permitted by the state regulations. These payments are made through the Adoptive Parents' Client Expense Account funds.

Out-of-Wedlock Fathers

In New York State, an expectant mother is not required to identify the father of the child. However, should a Birth Father be identified in a sworn statement, it is FFTA's responsibility to attempt to locate

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the Birth Father and notify him of any possible adoption plans concerning his child. If and when identified, the Birth Father needs to be located as quickly as possible so that he may have the option of either taking responsibility for the child, participating in any adoption plans made for the child, and/or terminating his rights to the child.

Should contact be established with the Birth Father of the child, FFTA will attempt to involve the Birth Father in the process of adoption, including the adoption plan and exchanging information with the Adoptive Parents.

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. also offers the Birth Father the option to accept or deny paternity to the child who is being placed for adoption. Should the Birth Father admit paternity, and is not able or willing to plan for the child, FFTA will make efforts to obtain a voluntary surrender from the Birth Father regarding his rights to parent the child. Should the Birth Father be unwilling to surrender his rights to the child, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will continue to work with the Birth Father to take necessary steps to terminate his parental rights. Absent a legal risk affidavit signed by the Adoptive Parent(s), Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will not place an out-of-wedlock child for adoption without the Birth Father's consent or surrender. Factors considered prior to the placement are if during the six month period prior to placement, the Birth Father: (1) offered a reasonable sum of money in connection with the Birth Mother's medical expenses relating to the pregnancy, (2) holds himself out as the father of the child, or (3) offers to or can provide adequate child support and housing. Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will explore all possible options with the Birth Father.

Should the birth father altogether deny paternity to the out-of-wedlock child, he is asked to do so in writing by signing documents prepared by the agency's legal staff. Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. explains and stresses the fact that the signing of a document that terminates parental rights is irrevocable. Unless separately represented, an attorney from Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. accompanies the Birth Father to Court in order to execute the appropriate documents to relinquish his parental rights.

New York State Putative Father Registry

After the birth of the child and prior to finalization, if the Birth Parents are not married, FFTA will complete and submit the required form to NYS Office of Children and Family Services requesting a search of the Putative Father Registry regarding the born child.

Counseling

Additional counseling is made available to all Expectant/Birth Parent(s). Upon request, additional services will be provided, including pre and post placement counseling. If this service cannot be provided by an agency social worker, the appropriate referral is made.

Indian Child Welfare Act

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. makes every effort to determine whether a child is of Native American descent for Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) compliance. Birth Parents are asked whether there is any possibility that the child is of Indian descent. FFTA provides services for Native American tribal members and/or potential tribal members.

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Pre-Placement and Post-Placement Contact

Unless the Adoptive Parents and Birth Parents are communicating on their own, there are three options offered by Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.:

1. Face-To-Face meeting with the Adoptive Parents using an agency social worker serving as a mediator.
2. Telephone Meeting with the Adoptive Parents that may include an agency social worker to serve as a mediator.
3. Contact in Writing through letters, photos and information about each party pre-and/or post-placement.

All of the above options are arranged through Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.

Confidentiality is very important. FFTA makes every effort to ensure identifying information is not made 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’s individual, confidential file.

Legal Services

Expectant/Birth Parents are encouraged to and offered the opportunity of retaining separate legal counsel at no cost to them. Should they choose to retain separate counsel, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. can assist the Expectant/Birth Parents locate an attorney in their area that has experience in adoption practice. If they chose not to retain separate counsel, FFTA prepares all necessary legal documents for the Expectant/Birth Parents regarding surrenders, termination of rights, and any other legal matters that may arise.

The reasonable attorney fees provided to the Expectant/Birth Parents are billed to the Adoptive Parents.

Counsel for FFTA will accompany the Birth Parents and their attorney to Court if requested and appropriate.

New York State Adoption and Medical Information Registry

If the child is born in New York State, FFTA provides Birth Parents with information about the NYS Health Department’s Adoption and Medical Information Registry, as well as the brochures to review and form to complete. FFTA provides an Adoption Information registry consent form at the time of surrender.

Print

Signature

Date: _____

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