

Agency Policies and Procedures for Expectant/Birth Parents

- Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is committed to providing quality services as quickly as possible 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 counseling with extensive discussions of alternatives to adoption, such as parenting the child, foster care, maternal or paternal relatives taking custody, guardianship or making an adoption plan for the child. All these possibilities are explored with the Birth Parents.
- 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. is sensitive to the unique needs of Expectant/Birth Parents, and strives to address these needs.
- Confidentiality is of utmost importance. All information remains confidential unless otherwise stated.
- 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 in mind as the major consideration when 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 its own case file and records are kept confidential.

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 is examined in light of what is in the best interest of the child.

Should an adoption plan be chosen as the best option, the Expectant/Birth Parent has a right to be an active participant in the plan. Expectant/Birth Parents are given the option of either surrendering their rights in court which becomes irrevocable immediately or out-of-court which becomes final after (30) thirty days. Expectant/Birth Parents are further advised that if they revoke an

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out-of-court surrender the judge determines through a hearing what is in the best interest of the child and it does not mean they will automatically get their child back. If the Expectant/Birth Parent's rights were previously terminated and they are no longer considered a party to the decision, counseling is offered.

Appointments with Expectant/Birth Parents

FFTA provides Expectant/Birth Parents with regular appointments as needed and makes every effort to ensure that any appointment made with a Birth Parent(s) is kept. If an appointment needs to be canceled, the Expectant/Birth Parent(s) are notified within 24-48 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting. If an appointment is canceled, it must be rescheduled.

Should it be necessary and when possible, a representative from Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is assigned to make a home visit at the convenience of the Expectant/Birth Parent(s).

After each meeting, contact, or home visit with an Expectant/Birth Parent(s), a record/report is kept of what was discussed. In addition, any correspondence received from or sent to the Expectant/Birth Parent(s) is kept in a file designated to that Expectant/Birth Parent(s).

Referrals

FFTA 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 Forever Families Through Adoption 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)
- follow-up with the referral
- make sure to give the birth parent(s) information about the referral.

Forever Families Through Adoption works with Expectant/Birth Parents in selecting adoptive parents for their child.

FFTA arranges for payment of the Birth Mother's pregnancy related expenses when needed and as permitted by the state regulations through our Client Expense Account funds.

Out-of-Wedlock Fathers (see 18 NYCRR 421.5)

Should a birth father be identified, it is the Agency's responsibility to attempt to locate the Birth Father and notify him of any possible adoption plans concerning his child.

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, or terminating his rights to the child.

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. takes every step possible to identify the birth father of an out-of-wedlock child. In addition, the relationship between the Birth Parents will also be examined by an agency representative.

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Should contact be established with the Birth Father of the child, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. 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 gives 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, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. attempts to obtain a voluntary surrender of the Birth Father's rights to the child, and only if it is the best interest of the child. Should the Birth Father be unwilling to surrender his rights to the child, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. continues to attempt to obtain a voluntary surrender or take the steps which are necessary to terminate parental rights, should it be in the best interest of the child. Absent a legal risk affidavit signed by the Adoptive Parent(s), Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will not place an out-of-wedlock child without the Birth Father's consent, surrender, or termination of parental rights. 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 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 in documents prepared by the legal staff of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. 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 Birth Parents are not married, FFTA will complete and submit the required form to NYS Office of Children and Family Services requesting that a search of the Putative Father Registry be made and the results sent to FFTA.

Counseling

Counseling is made available to any Expectant/Birth Parent(s) that requests or feels the need to utilize this service. This includes Post-Placement counseling.

This service is provided by an agency social worker. If the service is not available, an appropriate referral is made. (See referral section above for referral procedures).

Pre-Placement and Post-Placement Contact

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.:

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- 1) Face-To-Face meeting with the Adoptive Parents using an agency social worker serving as a mediator. The social worker writes a report on the meeting to be included in the file.
- 2) Telephone Meeting with the Adoptive 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) or letters (post-placement).

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

Confidentiality is very important. No identifying information is 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. If they choose to retain separate counsel, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is available to help the Expectant/Birth Parents locate someone in their area that has experience in handling adoptions. 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 that they are working with.

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.'s attorney will accompany the Birth Parents and their attorney, if requested, to Court if necessary and appropriate.

Sensitivity to the individual needs of each client of the agency is paramount.

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.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date