

How Do I Choose An Adoption Agency?



Congratulations! You have made the decision to build your family through adoption. The first step in your adoption journey is to choose an agency. You may be thinking that you want an agency that is licensed by the state, honest, and ethical.

You may also want to work with staff who is compassionate, patient, efficient, and available when you need them. It's a good idea to call a few different adoption agencies to see which one is the best fit for you and your family. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Researching an Agency

Gather as much information as possible about adoption in Wisconsin, adoption agencies, and state requirements. Ask questions like:

- What agencies offer the kind of programs you are looking for?
- Is the agency licensed by the state?
- Is the license current?
- When did the licensing board last visit the agency?
- Are there any current or unresolved complaints against the agency?

You can find these answers by contacting the Department of Children & Families at 608-267-3905 or at: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov>

Networking and Support Groups

You also might try networking with adoptive parent support groups to find out about the agencies they went to and ask for recommendations. (For a list of support groups, check out the resource section at the end of this tipsheet.)



Support groups and adoption classes are also helpful throughout the whole adoption process, because there is only so much information you can get from agency staff and websites. The real learning comes when you

can combine that information with forming relationships with others who are taking the same journey that you are.

Elizabeth Ghilardi, a Wisconsin adoptive parent says, "In the course of our adoption process, we went through 13 weeks of preparation classes; something we initially were not looking forward to, but turned out to be wonderful."

She goes on to say, "We have kept in touch with many of the families and have gatherings on a regular basis. We have developed an unbelievable support network that is invaluable to our family and the children. Among us, we've adopted a total of eight children, with several more pending."

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Once you've narrowed down the search for an adoption agency, set up an introductory meeting so you can ask more detailed questions.

Questions to Ask Agencies

Adopting your child will be one of the most important things you will ever do, and the most important thing you can do in this process is not be afraid to ask questions. There are the basic questions about age, marital status, income, health, religious affiliations, and sexual orientation.

Beyond these basics, you might also ask:

- Can you give us an itemized list of costs and fees associated with the entire process?
- Are you affiliated with any other adoption groups or religious organizations? This may be important to some while it may not be a priority to others.
- Does the agency offer a free orientation?
- What trainings does the agency provide?
- What pre-adoptive and post-adoption services does the agency provide?



- What types of services are offered to birth parents?
- What kinds of supports are offered to families during the adoption process?
- What is the average wait time for a referral?
- What are the agencies adoption matching policies?
- Does the agency have an attorney on staff or a list of attorneys to help in the legal process of adoption?
- If we are not approved, can we find out why? Is there an appeal process?

International Adoption

There are specific questions you may want to ask when pursuing international adoption, such as:

- Do you have a program or work with a placing agency for the country we are considering?
- Do you have more than one foreign adoption program to choose from?
- Can we switch our application to another country if regulations change?



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- How long have you been placing children from each country we are considering?
- Are the international agencies you work with licensed in their own countries?
- How much does it cost to adopt from each program?
- Do the fees include the fees to the international placing agency as well?
- Do the fees cover international processing, transportation, medical exams, document translation, visa, notarization, etc?
- How do you help prepare adoptive parents for the adoption trip?
- Do you help make travel arrangements?
- Do you have bilingual representatives in

each country to assist with the referral of a child? Will they be there to assist us when we arrive?

- Do you provide financial assistance to the orphanages from which you place children? Does the agency help the children in the country who are not adopted? Looking into the charities the agency is affiliated with can provide insight as to how the agency operates.

Remind yourself to stay open minded throughout the agency selection process. By asking questions to potential agencies there is a greater likelihood that the entire adoption process will be a positive experience.



Resources

AdoptiveFamilies.com

<http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=308>

Adopting.org

<http://www.adopting.org/adoptions/how-to-select-an-adoption-agency.html>

Support groups and post adoption resource centers in Wisconsin

<http://wiadoptioninfocenter.org/site/indexer/522/content.htm>

***I Can't Imagine Life Without You*, by Elizabeth Ghilardi**

<http://wiadoptioninfocenter.org/library/850/cantimaginelifewithoutyou.pdf>