

## TEN TIPS FOR ADOPTION



- 1 Different methods of adoption:** *County foster-adopt system*- the county has legal custody of the child because the birth parents were unfit or unable to parent; the county places the child with an adoptive family. *Private adoption agencies*- they find a birth mother and determine which client within the agency's list best meets that child's needs. *Private adoption attorneys*- they find pregnant women who want to place their children for adoption and match the babies with their clients. *International adoption agencies*- they find a child in a foreign country, the prospective adoptive parents go to the foreign country and bring the child back to their home.
- 2 The difference between closed, semi-open and open adoption:** *Closed adoption*- no information is exchanged, identifying or otherwise, between adoptive parents and birth parents. *Semi-Open*- The agency is the mediator and the birth mother is kept up-to-date with updates and pictures. *Open adoption*- birth parents get to choose the parents that they want to raise their biological child. Arrangements can be made between the adoptive parents and the birth parents for ongoing contact throughout the future years.
- 3 Legal requirements to become an adoptive parent:** Check with a local attorney, find out what the local requirements are and see if you can meet those requirements. In California, for example, the only legal requirement for an adoption is that the adopting parent be more than ten years older than the child; single, unmarried, same-sex couples, and married couples can all adopt.
- 4 What birth mothers are looking for:** Most birth mothers are looking for a financially and emotionally secure environment for their child. They often look for someone who is in a stable relationship. Most importantly, they want to make sure the child is going into a safe and secure home.
- 5 Getting a birth mother to choose you:** Tell everyone you know that you want to adopt. Write a letter describing your life and who you are, including interests and activities. Create a booklet or a website with images of your life. Work with qualified adoption professionals with contacts with hospitals. There are different state laws regarding the legality of prospective adoptive parents' advertising.
- 6 Bonding with your adopted child:** Parents can learn specific strategies to help their adopted children bond and develop secure attachment. Physical play including hugs, kisses, cuddling, snuggling, and carrying gives the opportunity for skin-to-skin contact and for eye-to-eye contact.
- 7 The adoption story is important:** Experts say that the more you can tell your child about their adoption story, the better adjusted they will be. The best way to incorporate your child's birth and adoption story is to tell the story again and again. Keep it age appropriate; as your child grows you can add more detail. The adoption story should be a normal, every day part of the fabric of your family.
- 8 Waiting lists are a great place to adopt your child:** Various nations produce domestic lists of children between one month and 17 years old with different special needs and emotional needs. These amazing children are often overlooked.

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- 9 Foster care is a wonderful option for those looking to adopt:** There are over 100,000 children in the foster care system in America waiting to be adopted. The majority of these children are school age, siblings and ethnic minorities. These amazing children are often overlooked.
- 10 Aging out of the system:** Over 20,000 kids age out of the foster care system per year. At age 18, they are emancipated from the system with nothing but the clothes on their back. 60% of the male children end up in jail. 50% are homeless within two years of aging out of the system. 30% rely on state care. Only 2% graduate college. Find out how you can help ease the transition for these kids by contacting your local foster care system.

*The following Kids In The House interviews contributed to this "Ten Tips for Adoption": Beth Hall, Felice Webster, JD, Langka Domberger, Laurie Burns, Jennifer Bliss, PsyD, Jill Boyer, MSW, Maureen Donley, MFT, and Steve Ravel, JD.*