

file adoption

from HRC

SECOND OPINION



cc: adoption file
press file
Maggie McLane
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Diane Blair
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BY ABIGAIL TRAFFORD

Having Another Child

I always wanted a lot of children. My high school yearbook ran the prediction under my photograph: "raising five children." After I gave birth to two daughters, I didn't think I'd stop there. Even after I was divorced and in my thirties, I thought I would have more children. Reality had no bearing on this yearning. Not having a potential father for these imaginary progeny made no difference. I had an internal on-switch for living in the mothering mode. The sense that I would have more children was a constant in the background.

That is why it doesn't surprise me that Hillary

Clinton let drop the comment that she might like to have another child. Add to her family. Give Chelsea a sibling. Adopt a baby boy. "We've thought about it," the First Lady told Time magazine. I don't know how serious her intentions are. As she explained, she's a little busy right now.

But I know reality doesn't matter much when it comes to the abstract longing to have another child. Most women simply lack an internal off-switch to take them out of the mothering mode.

This is something many of us have trouble talking about. While modern medicine has revolutionized the reproductive aspect of motherhood, it has not changed the mothering switch inside the psyche. While it has given women safe and effective means to control their fertility—sending birth rates to historic lows in the industrialized world—it has not controlled the abstract yearning to mother.

"You never lose it," said Florence P. Haseltine, director of the Center for Population Research at the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development. "Hillary Clinton has a teenage daughter and she still wants another child. Mother instincts conquer all!"

See a baby in the street, hear a newborn's cry and the yearning starts again. "It's still there," agreed demographer Stephanie Ventura of the National Center for Health Statistics, who's studied women's attitudes toward fertility during the past three decades. "There's a pretty stable interest in having a child." Even among women in their early thirties who had never married, more than 70 percent said they expected to have a child, according to the Census Bureau. Among divorced or widowed women of the same age, 91 percent wanted a child. Among married women, the figure was 93 percent.

What has changed radically in modern times is not the maternal instinct, but the role of reproduction in people's lives. For example:

- Women today have fewer babies than their great-great-grandmothers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the current lifetime birth rate is about two babies per woman. A century ago, it was four children per woman. Two hundred years ago it was seven children. The low birth rate in part reflects advances in health care during pregnancy and delivery and better treatment for childhood

diseases. The infant death rate has plummeted since the turn of the century, which means women don't need to have so many pregnancies and deliveries to make sure one or two children survive to adulthood. As Ventura pointed out: "People don't have to have a whole lot of children."

- Women today have greater choice in when they want to have children—and how many children they bear. In 1990, more than 70 percent of married women used some form of contraception. This is up from 56 percent in 1965, according to government reports. Married women are more likely to use

COMMENTARY

contraception than single women, even though a higher proportion of married women say they expect to have children. (This disconnect helps explain why 40 percent of pregnancies are "unplanned" with a significant percentage occurring among unmarried women.)

- Women can extend their child-bearing years with test-tube baby techniques. To begin with, women tend to be older before they start their families. In 1990, half the women who had their first child were 24 or older. In the 1950s, at the height of the baby boom, the median age was 22. A growing fraction of women are waiting until their thirties to start families. A small number of women have babies in their forties. Of 4 million births in 1993, 2,300 were born to women 45 and over.

Menopause is no longer a physiological barrier to having a child. You can be a Methusaleh Mom and bear a child in your fifties or older thanks to advanced reproductive techniques of egg donation, laboratory fertilization and embryo implantation. (In this procedure, a younger woman's egg is fertilized with a man's sperm in the laboratory; the embryo is implanted in the older woman's uterus.)

So there's no reason for Hillary Clinton or any woman to give up the notion of having another child. Not only is there the option of adoption, but modern medicine has blurred the cutoff date traditionally associated with menopause.

When do women stop wanting to have more children?

Perhaps we never do. I suspect we stay in the mothering mode, even though on average we give birth to fewer children. It's just that the process of procreation has become less a part of motherhood.

Mothering is about having a stake in the next generation. I remember the advice I received as a young bride from an old friend of my grandmother's: "You will have lots of babies—mental and physical babies." I pressed her on what she meant. Physical babies, she said, were the ones listed on a birth certificate. Mental babies were the other acts of creation, big and small, in love and friendship, in work and community. All these "babies," she wisely told me, have to do with the creative instinct of mothering. ■

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

**SEALED
RECORDS
*DO NOT OPEN!***

ILLINOIS
COUNCIL FOR
ADoption
REFORM AND
EDUcATION

P.O. Box 8393
NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS 60093

February 13, 1996

Margaret Williams
Chief of Staff to the First Lady
Office of the First Lady
Old Executive Office Building
Room 100
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Ms. Williams:

Enclosed please find two ICARE newsletters and an education/information packet given to Illinois legislators by ICARE.

ICARE would like the First Lady to know that infant adoption reform should be focused on the following philosophy: **HOMES FOR CHILDREN NOT CHILDREN FOR HOMES**. Single mothers are vulnerable and should never be seen as a cure for infertility. There should be no link between infertility and single motherhood.

Single mothers considering adoption should never be asked to sign papers anytime before 30 days after giving birth. Adoption is a lifelong process and decision. It is not possible to know reality until it has happened. No one planning a wedding can know what the day will really be like until it happens and so it goes with giving birth. All birthparents should be granted a period of revocation once surrender documents have been signed. The revocation period should at least equal the time adopting people have to change their mind, which is until the adoption is final. Did you know 15% of adopting people return children prior to finalization? Returns are made for all kinds of reasons. Skin and hair color weren't quite what was imagined. The baby cried too much or was sick too often. In case a child is returned by the adopting people, the biological mother should be notified and given the opportunity to parent. Biological parents should be given notice in case of death or serious injury/illness of their children.

Margaret Williams

February 13, 1996

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There should be a Birthparent Bill of Rights that all adoption facilitators must adhere to. Biological parents must have a court appointed advocate during the surrender process. In many cases the infant has a court appointed advocate. Why not the bio parents? Adoption advertising is insulting and only shows the obvious class and race issues that exist with infant adoption. Would we allow advertising for the purchase of an 8 year old? Until attorneys are trained in issues of mental health and specifically infant adoption issues such as loss of child, infertility, identity, and feelings of abandonment, there should be no private adoptions.

All adopting people need to be aware, through proper counseling and advocacy, that adoption is a lifelong process and open-ended. RECORDS SHOULD NEVER BE SEALED and moreover adoption birth certificates should not include fabrications. Sealing records violates the civil rights of an adoptee.

Think these ideas are way out? Look at current Australian and New Zealand adoption laws? Look at California laws regarding relinquishment. Three states in the US have completely open records. Read, "Wake Up Little Susie" by Rickie Solinger for a complete history and understanding of infant adoption in the United States. Four countries in the world do not seal adoption records. British Columbia, Canada just opened adoption records. Listen and talk with members of the countless nationwide birthparent and adult adoptee support groups.

Let's learn from the past. Listen to adult adoptees and birthparents who are living the experience of adoption. Thank you for this opportunity to share with you our ideas for change.

Sincerely,



Cindy Bhimani

Founder and Executive Director

ILLINOIS COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION REFORM AND EDUCATION (ICARE)
P. O. BOX 8393, NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS 60093 708/446-1615

Our mission...

CONTINUING EDUCATION

for Illinois Legislators

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R EFORM AND
E DUCATION

P. O. Box 8393
NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS 60093
708/446-1615

MISSION STATEMENT

ICARE seeks to promote

honesty, openness and integrity in the adoption process through education, advocacy and legislative reform. We believe that adoption law and practice should be child centered, responsive to the needs of all family members, and be grounded in research, current adoption literature and the experiences of those whose lives have been impacted by adoption.

IN HONOR OF NOVEMBER
NATIONAL ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH . . .

I LLINOIS
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R EFORM AND
E DUCATION

P. O. Box 8393
NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS 60093
708/446-1615

November, 1995

Dear Illinois Legislator:

In keeping with the ICARE Mission Statement, we have assembled the enclosed information to provide you with the most up-to-date research, literature and comments available concerning adoption reform. ICARE plans to keep you informed by adding updates to this folder throughout the year. It will be easy for you or your assistant to add our mailings.

In addition, we are always interested in speaking with you about sponsoring adoption reform legislation in Illinois. Our areas of interest include the surrender process and open records. Along with written information, we can provide birthparents and adoptees for hearings and interviews.

Thank you for your time and interest. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact ICARE.

Sincerely,

Illinois Council for Adoption
Reform and Education (ICARE)

I LLINOIS
C OUNCIL FOR
A DOPTION
R EFORM AND
E DUCATION

P. O. Box 8393
NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS 60093

November, 1995

ICARE POSITION STATEMENT
SURRENDER IN ILLINOIS

There would be fewer disputed adoptions in Illinois if ... women were not signing a lifelong agreement, without counseling and legal advocacy, at the 73rd hour after giving birth.

Unfortunately, Illinois allows surrenders to be signed, by mothers, 72 hours after birth and before birth for fathers -- OR, before reality. Pregnant unmarried women are in crisis and should not be asked or expected to sign their children away so soon after birth. The State should not be interfering with parenthood by attempting to define who can be a mother and when a woman can be a mother. Parents considering the surrender of their children to adoption should be granted a revocation period at least equal to finalization of the adoption proceedings.

Illinois
Council for
Adoption
Reform and
Education

P. O. Box 8393
Northfield, IL 60093

ADOPTION FACTS

The Numbers

An estimated 50,000 children were adopted in the USA last year.

An estimated 30,000 U.S. youngsters are free for adoption and awaiting homes.

An estimated 2,000,000 persons in the USA are currently seeking to adopt.

Agency vs. Private Placement Adoptions

Private adoptions represent 70% of all adoptions in Illinois. No preplacement investigations of prospective adoptive parents are required in private adoptions.

A private for-profit organization can be licensed to place children in adoptive homes.

There are over 40 adoption agencies in Illinois. Only 9 are members of the Child Welfare League of America and/or accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Children and Families (COA).

It is legal in Illinois for prospective adoptive parents to advertise for babies to adopt. 18 states prohibit such advertising.

Open Adoption

An Open Adoption Agreement is not enforceable in court. If a mother selects her child's adoptive parents, agrees to a certain level of contact, and the adoptive parents fail to abide with the agreement, the birthparents have no recourse in the court.

Access to Records

Once an adoption is finalized, an amended birth certificate is issued, showing the adoptive parents as the only parents. The original birth certificate and all adoption records are permanently sealed, to be opened by court order only.

Only 3 states permit access to adoption records without a court order: Alaska, Alabama, and Kansas.

21 states, including Illinois, have a passive Mutual Consent Registry where adoptees and birthparents can register for a possible match. The state or agency will facilitate a meeting.

There is no requirement to inform the public of the availability of a registry. The Illinois Registry was established in 1985 and has registered 545 adoptees and 474 birthmothers, facilitating only 17 reunions in 10 years.

11 states, including Illinois, provide for a Confidential Intermediary System to locate birthparents to inquire about consent to release identifying information. Illinois' system requires a court order to participate.

The Relinquishment Process

Mothers may relinquish their parental rights only 72 hours after birth of the child. Once signed, the relinquishment is final and irrevocable. (Only 12 states provide no rescission rights to birthmothers.)

There is no provision in Illinois law to require counseling for the birthmother prior to signing relinquishment documents.

Fathers can relinquish their parental rights at any time before or at 72 hours after the child is born.

The consent or surrender of a minor parent is not voidable because that parent is a minor.

If the adoption does not go through, the court has the right to conduct a hearing to determine custody of the child. There is no requirement to notify the birthparents.

Notification to fathers about a proposed adoption is not required, unless they have registered with the Putative Father Registry within 30 days of the child's birth, and commenced a paternity suit within 30 days after registering. The only exception to this occurs when the father was actively and openly involved in the child's birth/life.

The length of time to finalize an adoption is approximately 6 months, during which time the adoptive parents can change their mind about adoption and return the child to the adoption arranger. No such provision is available for birthparents.

Adoptive parents are required to be given background and medical information on birthparents no later than the date the child is placed in their home. No such information is required to be provided to birthparents about adoptive parents, but Agencies generally do provide this information to birthparents upon request.

**ILLINOIS COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION REFORM AND EDUCATION
STATE BY STATE SURRENDER RE-CAP**

ALABAMA

Consent may be signed before birth but Mom has 5 days after she signs Consent to Adoption or after the birth of her child to withdraw her Consent.

ALASKA

Consent may be signed anytime after the birth of her child but once the Consent is signed the Mom has 10 days to withdraw her Consent.

ARIZONA

Consent may be signed 72 hours after the birth of her child and is irrevocable.

ARKANSAS

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and once the Consent is signed the Mom has 10 days to withdraw her Consent.

CALIFORNIA

For private adoptions (85%), a Mom may withdraw her Consent up to 120 days after signing.

COLORADO

Consent may be signed anytime after birth. The Mom must receive counseling from a state adoption office or a licensed adoption agency. The Consent may be withdrawn anytime before the Order of Relinquishment is entered in Court.

CONNECTICUT

"Petition to Terminate Parental Rights" may be signed 48 hours after birth. Parental rights are not severed until approximately 4 weeks after signature. Mom is required to receive counseling and is appointed a guardian ad litem, usually an attorney.

DELAWARE

Consent may be signed anytime after birth. The Consent and Petition are entered in Court approximately 60 days after filing. From the point of Court, the Mom has another 60 days to withdraw her Consent.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

For private adoptions (65%), the Mom may sign the Consent to surrender anytime after the birth of her child. The Consent is considered irrevocable. In agency adoptions, the Mom may not sign the Consent prior to 72 hours after the birth of her child. Counseling is mandatory. The Mom has 10 days after the relinquishment is signed to withdraw her Consent by written request.

FLORIDA

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and is irrevocable.

GEORGIA

Consent may be signed 24 hours after the birth and the Mom has 10 days to withdraw her Consent.

HAWAII

For private adoptions, the Mom may sign the Consent anytime after the birth of her child and the Consent is irrevocable. For agency adoptions, the Consent may be signed anytime after birth and until the child is placed with adopting people the Consent may be withdrawn.

IDAHO

Consent may be signed anytime after 72 hours from birth and the Consent is irrevocable.

ILLINOIS

Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth and is irrevocable.

INDIANA

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and the Consent may be withdrawn anytime before the Court finalization of the adoption (approximately 3 months).

IOWA

Consent may be signed anytime after 72 hours from birth and the Mom has 96 hours to withdraw her Consent.

KANSAS

Consent may be signed anytime after 12 hours from birth and the Consent is irrevocable.

KENTUCKY

Consent cannot be signed prior to 5 days after birth and the Consent may be withdrawn anytime until the adoption is finalized in Court (6 -8 months).

LOUISIANA

Surrender is signed no sooner than 5 days after the birthdate of her child and the Surrender is irrevocable.

MAINE

Surrender or Release can be signed anytime after birth and the either document can be withdrawn anytime before the adoption is finalized (6 - 12 months).

MARYLAND

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and the Mom has an automatic 30 days to withdraw her Consent.

MASSACHUSETTS

Consent may be signed no sooner than 4 days after birth and the Consent is irrevocable.

MICHIGAN

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and after a Judge affirms the consent document the Mom has 20 days to withdraw but only by proving fraud or duress.

MINNESOTA

For private adoptions (80%) a Consent may be signed anytime after birth and once the Consent is signed the Mom has an automatic 10 days to withdraw.

MISSISSIPPI

Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth. No statutory law exists governing the possible withdrawal.

MISSOURI

Consent may be signed 48 hours after birth and before the Consent is entered in Court, the Mom has the automatic right to withdraw her Consent.

MONTANA

Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth and the Consent can only be withdrawn by the Mom proving to the Court that the child's best interest would be served by being with her.

NEBRASKA

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and is irrevocable.

NEVADA

For private adoptions, full identities must be shared by law. Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth and is irrevocable.

NEW JERSEY

For private adoptions, the Consent may be signed anytime after birth and the Mom has an automatic right to withdraw her Consent anytime until the preliminary court hearing (2 - 3 months). For agency adoptions, the Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth and is irrevocable.

NEW MEXICO

Consent may be signed 48 hours after birth and must be signed before a Judge and is irrevocable.

NEW YORK

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and may be withdrawn anytime up to 45 days from the date of signature with conditions.

NORTH CAROLINA

It is required that adopting people and the Mom share identities. The Mom has an automatic right to withdraw her Consent for a period of 30 days after signing.

NORTH DAKOTA

Consent may be signed anytime after birth but will not be heard in Court before 48 hours after birth and at that point the Consent is irrevocable.

OHIO

Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth and the Mom must appear in Court. When the Mom is in Court the Consent is deemed irrevocable.

OKLAHOMA

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and the Mom has 30 days to withdraw her Consent.

OREGON

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and the Mom has an automatic right to withdraw her Consent until the adoption is final (7 months).

PENNSYLVANIA

Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth and the Mom has an automatic right to withdraw her Consent until it has been entered in Court (40-90 days).

RHODE ISLAND

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and the Consent is NOT enforceable for approximately 3 months.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and is irrevocable.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Consent may be signed 5 days after birth and the Mom must appear in Court for the hearing that follows. At the Court hearing the Consent is irrevocable.

TENNESSEE

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and may be withdrawn within 15 days from signing.

TEXAS

For private adoptions, the Consent may be signed anytime after birth and usually the Mom has the right to withdraw depending on whatever time period is specified. In agency adoptions the Consent is irrevocable upon execution.

UTAH

Consent may be signed 48 hours after birth, before a Judge, and the Consent is irrevocable.

VERMONT

Consent may be signed anytime after birth, before a Judge and the Mom has an automatic right to withdraw until the Consent is filed with the Court in a hearing (10 days).

VIRGINIA

Consent may be signed 10 days after birth and the Mom has an additional 15 days after signing to automatically withdraw.

WASHINGTON

Consent may be signed before or after birth and the Mom may withdraw up to Court filing (not before 48 hours after birth).

WEST VIRGINIA

Consent may be signed 72 hours after birth and the Mom may withdraw the Consent up to 20 days from signing unless otherwise stated.

WISCONSIN

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and the Mom may withdraw the Consent up to her Court appearance (1 - 4 weeks after birth).

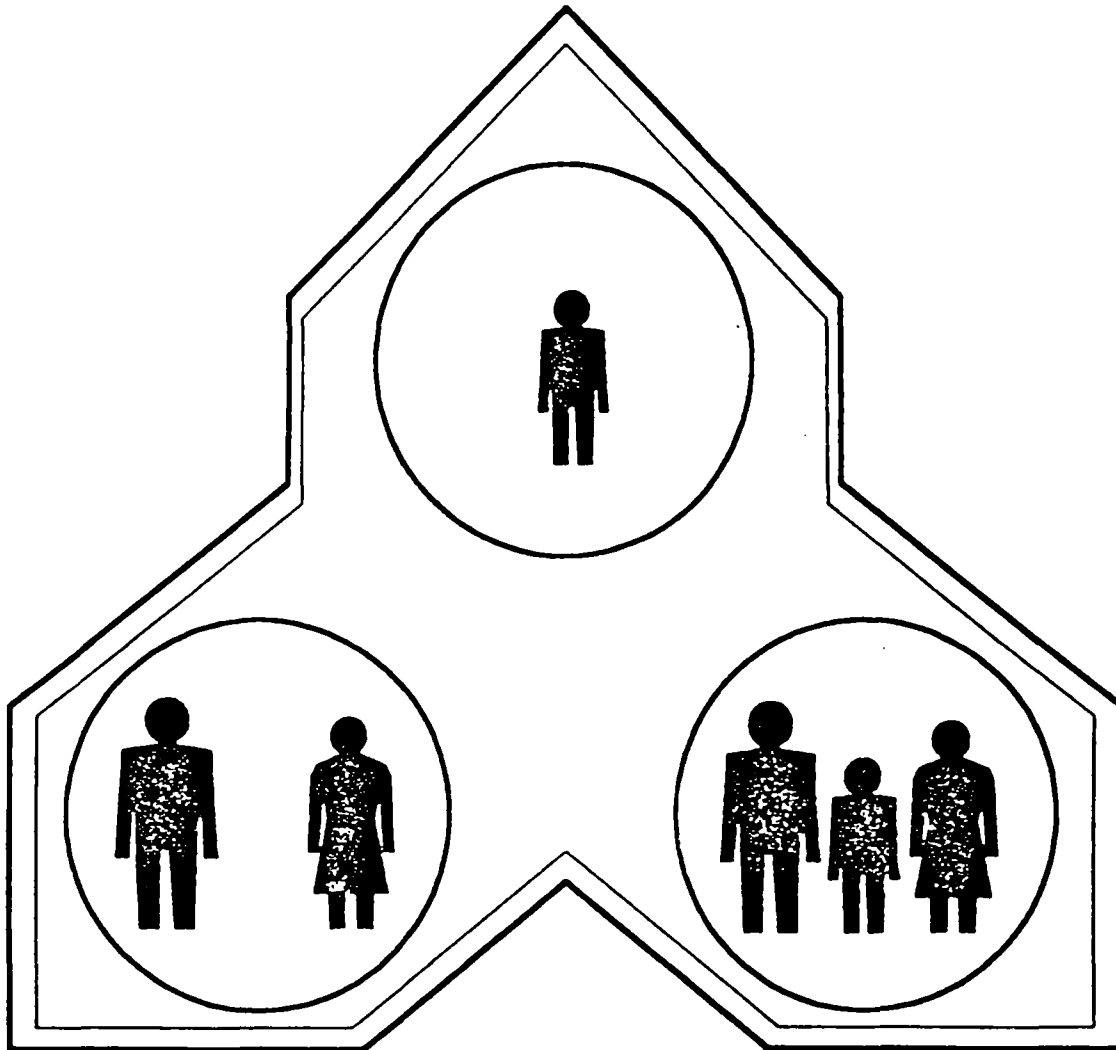
WYOMING

Consent may be signed anytime after birth and is irrevocable.

Source: Adopting in America, Randall B. Hicks, 1993, WordSlinger Press, P. O. Box 53, Sun City, CA 92586-9998.

ADOPTION

A LIFE LONG PROCESS



REPORT OF THE ADOPTION TASK FORCE
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

MARCH 1989

John R. McKernan Jr.
Governor



Rollin Ives
Commissioner

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES
IN THE ADOPTION LAW AND
RELATED PROCEDURES

Recommendation 21:

That neither a consent nor a surrender and release shall be executed prior to six weeks following a baby's birth, during which time a licensed individual or agency would have to provide to the court certification that counseling was provided or offered and refused. The consent or surrender and release shall be in a two-step process where the judge will explain the effect of the consent or surrender and release at least three days before the parent executes the consent or surrender and release. Before accepting the parent's consent or surrender and release the judge shall determine that the consent or surrender and release is willingly and knowledgeably given.

Recommendation 22:

That the certification of counseling and the acceptance of the consent or surrender and release may be done in a court of comparable jurisdiction in another state.

Recommendation 23:

That consent is final only for the adoption consented to, and, if that adoption is not finalized within eighteen months, the court where the petition was filed will hold a hearing as to the future of the child. (See recommendations 41 and 42.)

Recommendation 24:

That when a surrender and release and/or consent for adoption is signed, a copy shall be given to the surrendering party along with a statement explaining the importance of keeping the court informed of current name and address.

Recommendation 25:

That a birthmother's consent for adoption or surrender and release will not be final until the birthfather's consent, surrender and release or termination of his rights has been decided by the probate court.

Recommendation 26:

That all putative fathers who have not waived notice, joined the birth mother in a consent or surrender and release, or had their parental rights terminated, will be given notice in accordance with Maine Rules of Civil Procedure. If a birthmother doesn't know who the birthfather is, publication of notice to the unknown birth father shall be done in the area where the petition is filed and/or where the birthmother became pregnant, or where the putative father is most likely to be located, before the court accepts the birth mother's consent or surrender and release. The birth mother's and baby's names will be used in the notice.

Adoption Abuse

by Carole Anderson and Lee Campbell, with Mary Anne Cohen. Reprinted from Womenwise, Vol. 5, No. 3, Fall 1983.

You may never have heard the term birth-mothers before, but we are the mothers who have surrendered children to adoption. We have joined together to form a national, non-profit group called Concerned United Birthparents, Inc. (CUB). We are the living proof of why all feminists must oppose legislation that now threatens to destroy the gains made for women in the past few years.

Most people assume that mothers who surrender their babies to adoption do so because they don't want their children. Or they assume that mothers choose adoption as a means of providing more for their children than they could offer. In our view, these assumptions are dangerously simplistic.

In a male-dominated society, a woman's expression of sexuality is permitted only within strict bounds. Traditionally, only when she is married is sexual activity considered legitimate; indeed, it is expected at a husband's whim as his right.

For thousands of years men have sought to control women's sexuality and fertility. Out-of-wedlock pregnancies have historically merited harsh punishment. In some cultures, that punishment is even death. An unmarried pregnant woman is still considered, in some Moslem countries, to be such a stain on the family's honor that it can be cleansed only through the woman's death, and the murderer is rarely prosecuted.

America's preferred punishment appears more civilized. We favor removal of the evidence: before birth, in maternity homes, segregated educational programs, or away at Aunt Sally's; after birth, by adoption. When these preferences are ignored, we mount subtle but effective campaigns to condemn the perpetrators. We sympathize with infertility among married couples in the same breath that we bemoan the so-called "unwed teenage pregnancy epidemic," as though the issues are related. We proclaim that "adoption builds families" without reference to the female-headed families adoption has separated, as though they never existed. We begrudge the subsidies that help economically deficient single-parent families to remain together, while we uncomplainingly subsidize foster care and adoption.

Most younger single mothers have little knowledge of rights. They are accustomed to following the advice of parents, teachers, and other authority figures. Frightened, vulnerable, and economically dependent, mothers whose parents are

not supportive are easy prey to the social workers, attorneys, and doctors who arrange adoptions and collect placement fees of as much as \$30,000 for healthy white infants.

Most CUB members surrendered children at a time when they were unaware of financial help that would have enabled them to keep their children, or when such help did not exist. Most encountered social workers who failed to give information about alternatives that could have aided mothers to keep their families together. Children of single parents, it was said, would be ridiculed at school as bastards, or grow up to be homosexual because they lacked a father image, or would live in poverty forever because no decent man would marry their mother. Through the 1960's most schools expelled pregnant students, thus denying them a chance to graduate. And day care opportunities were rare even if a mother could find a job that would support her and her child. Denied education, denied jobs and denied any knowledge of financial assistance, few had any option but to surrender their children.

The loss of a child to adoption is a unique and unnatural one. Unlike death, which is final, adoption creates a loss that is renewed daily, as each day is a new day of trying to live without the surrendered child whose life continues separately. It is a limbo loss, in which there are constant questions but no answers. Is my child well or ill? Happy or miserable? Alive or dead?

For ten years I tied up all my emotional energy in trying to pretend it never happened, and I almost believed it. I had to stay emotionally detached to survive. I was afraid to face all this pain, but I was numbing myself to everything else in life too.

Part of me died. I feel empty inside, I'm afraid to make decisions about anything, and I can't trust anyone. I was told so many lies. I can't let anyone get close to me, especially men, and I cringe if a man touches me.

When I was eighteen I believed what the social worker said about adoptive couples. That they were screened so they were totally perfect parents who had everything my child needed, and I had nothing. Now I know adoptive parents are the same as everyone else. They're not perfect. I feel cheated. Why did I have to compete with other people for the right to raise my own child?

Forcing me to surrender my child was an ultimate act of rape. I wish that when they were through with me, they had put a bullet in my head so I wouldn't have to live in such anguish.

CONTROLLING OUR FERTILITY

When a mother surrenders her child, she is allowed no options in the terms of that surrender. She has no right to participate in selecting who will raise her child, to know anything about her child's adoptive parents, to know anything about her child's health or welfare. She has no right to choose whether or not she wishes to be anonymous to the adoptive parents or to her child, even after her child is an adult. She has no right to legal counsel, no right to be informed of alternatives, no right to copies of information about her. She has no right to her child's original birth certificate, nor to the falsified version that will later be substituted to state that the adoptive parents gave birth. She has no right to know the legal process involved in adoption. She even has no right to receive a copy of the surrender document that separates her child from her.

Social workers defend this process by claiming that adoption is a positive choice for a young woman with an unplanned pregnancy since it permits the mother to correct her mistake. They insist that the mother's pain is temporary, and that she will be able to begin a new life. That same child who was described as a burden to the mother is transformed into a blessing for a married couple able to pay a placement fee.

Many adoptive mothers, too, have sought to keep birthmothers in the role of brood mares. While some adoptive mothers have joined in CUB's efforts, others loudly proclaim that they alone are really mothers, that birthmothers do not deserve to know of their children's welfare, that God gave the child to adoptive parents, or that birthmothers should be grateful to adoptive parents for having saved their children from the stigma of illegitimacy. These adoptive parents demand that birthmothers respect adoptive parents' efforts, while they ignore birthmothers' sacrifices.

These women, too, are victims. Many have reported feelings of inadequacy and insecurity as a result of their inability to bear children of their own. Made by our society to feel their value as women depended on their ability to bear children, some feel they have to adopt babies and act as if they had borne them. The final proof of motherhood—the child's birth certificate—is permanently sealed, and a false one issued to reinforce the idea that birth alone confers motherhood.

Feminists have been slow to recognize adoption's exploitation of their sisters. Perhaps one reason is that women have been not only the victims of adoption abuse but also its chief perpetrators and beneficiaries. Just as it is women like Phyllis Schlafly who have led efforts to de-

feat the Equal Rights Amendment and advances for women's rights, it is women who have fought to continue adoption abuse.

Reflecting the changes brought about by the women's movement, in the recent past single mothers have succumbed less frequently to adoption abuse. But know these things: Although only 3 percent of mothers under twenty now choose adoption, 43 percent of 125 cities with a population of 100,000 or more offer adoption services. The clientele being served today are infertile couples who, unwilling to adopt the many older or special-needs children who are available, wait in frustration on ever-lengthening lists for healthy, white infants. Joining agency workers' and infertile couples' demand for adoptable babies are anti-choice proponents who blithely tout adoption as the answer to abortion.

In response to this burgeoning undercurrent are Right-Wing-sponsored legislation and programs that are dangerous to single-parent families. One is the Adolescent Family Life bill which asserts that "adoption is a positive option for unmarried pregnant adolescents," and seeks an allocation of \$30 million for three years for demonstration projects. Under the act's provisions, teens are to be advised not to be sexually active, but if they must, to get parental consent for contraceptive use. If these provisions are ignored, then the mothers are to be "encouraged" to separate forever from their children by adoption.

The Family Protection Act is evidence of further bias. It would permit a \$1,000 tax exemption for the year in which a child is born or adopted, but only if the parents are married. The tax exemption is increased to \$3,000 for the adoption of a bi-racial or handicapped child. Thus a single mother raising her child could not receive the tax consideration to which her married counterparts are entitled.

The potential abuse of a Human Life Amendment is obvious to feminists everywhere. Supporters of HLA are often eloquent in their defense of the fertilized egg but are seldom willing to aid the woman whose body nourishes it.

The Family Protection Act, Adolescent Family Life bill, and Human Life Amendment attempt to impose an official governmental view of morality on women, especially those who are most impressionable and least powerful because of their youth. They attempt to punish the "immoral" by forcing them to give birth and then depriving them of their children.

Unless we exert the same effort in this area of reproductive rights as we do in others, single-parent families will be unnecessarily separated by adoption in the same manner they have al-

IF YOU THINK YOU ARE PREGNANT: FINDING OUT AND DECIDING WHAT TO DO

ways been. Adoption is especially susceptible to exploitation because there are no laws granting rights to birthmothers, no system of accountability for agency workers, and no recognition among lay people of the conflict of interest that inevitably arises when counselling centers and maternity homes double as adoption agencies.

Despite claims by the New Right to the contrary, adoption as it is traditionally practiced is not the panacea for all of society's ills. The unnecessary separation of mothers and children is a cruel, but regrettably usual, punishment that can last a lifetime.

A lifetime of suffering is too much to demand for any woman's expression of her sexuality. Even if contraception is obtainable, no fertile woman is ever safe from the possibility of unintended pregnancy, since there is no method that is 100% reliable. Even abstinence has its failures since rape exists.

We birthmothers are openly fighting for the

rights of the young women of the future who may be threatened with our fate. Our lives are testimony to the devastating effects of the oppression of women that is our mutual foe. Help us, and let us help you, in our common cause. We are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, perhaps even yourselves.

Lee Campbell is a founder and President of CUB. Carole Anderson is Vice President for Public Education for CUB and the editor of *The Communicator*, CUB's monthly newsletter. Mary Anne Cohen is a poet, feminist and an original member of CUB.

Concerned United Birthparents, Inc., is a national organization with forty branches throughout the U.S. For more information about this organization or to arrange for presentations, write CUB National Headquarters, 595 Central Ave., Dover, NH 03820.

Exploitation in the 90's: Alive & Well

Michelle Renaud, Cambridge MA

I am writing this Editorial as a step towards making sure what happened to me never happens to another woman again. This incident did not take place in 1946, 1959, 1968 or during the '70s. It happened one year ago — in 1993. Although many new adoptive parents would have you believe the coercion of yesteryear is no longer the plight and threat of birth mothers today . . . that, indeed, "things have changed", exploitation of pregnant young women today is as rampant as it was in by-gone eras. The "facilitators" have simply mastered their methods of executing exploitative strategies.

I was 19, my marriage was in a rapidly disintegrating state, and I was pregnant. The potential of homelessness was a viable alternative moving ever closer to reality. Efforts to find a job were for naught. One look at my young age and obvious pregnancy left potential employers repeating a litany of "no" with such consistency, it sounded like a rehearsed novena. The law was on my side for maternity leave, and they knew it — regardless of how I pleaded my intent to be a responsible employee.

In desperation I sought help for my marriage, to thwart homelessness, to get help of some kind somewhere. I chose the Latter Day Saints Social Services (LDS) believing they had many "social services" available and would be able to provide alternatives, if not the means for solutions, to the crises I then faced.

LDS agency director Don Staheli listened. He offered no marriage counseling to help us work through the existing problems or salvage the marriage. They would, he said, find housing for me only if I made an adoption plan. No mention was made of a shelter. I didn't know (then) there were safe shelters in the area for women in my position. I capitulated.

Staheli was not only the social worker at LDS, but the director for the New England Agency which facilitates adoptions in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont and Connecticut.

Staheli sent me to a remote suburb. I was allowed to leave the "host home" only to attend church or keep doctor appointments. I was isolated, trapped and knew of no other alternative. Were there any books on adoption?, I asked. Don said he didn't know of any. Were there other birth mothers I could talk to? Don said there weren't any in the area.

Staheli knew I wanted to keep my baby. When I asked what kind of help was available if I decided to parent my child, he looked at the carpet, stared at some spot there, then slowly raised his eyes and said, "Welfare". He delivered the word as though it was a level below which no decent human being would stoop. Welfare. That was it. He dropped the word like a ten-ton truck, letting his silence and penetrating eye-contact speak far louder than any words. 'Welfare'; it was the final and irrevocable alternative.

A professional response might have been, "Well, you can apply for benefits through Welfare, and you might have to continue that for a couple years, but you're a capable woman", but he did not. A responsible, professional social worker would have informed me that attending a community college was viable and, in a few years, I would have a marketable skill which would enable me to support both of us if my husband didn't come through with support. He did not.

In part (3), section 5.04 of the Office For Children regulations it states: "Information on Alternatives to Adoption. The licensee shall provide to birth parent/s written information regarding" alternative plans for their child." Staheli did nothing of the kind. Instead he said, "When the unwed parents are unable or unwilling to marry, they should be encouraged to place the child for adoption, preferably through LDS Social Services". (This official LDS policy has been published twice in the Church's magazine *The Ensign* in June 1994 and September 1994. In the latter case, the policy appeared in an article entitled "Advice For Un-Wed Parents" which showcased one birth mother. The author praised her for relinquishing her parental rights, and criticized her extended family for offering her alternatives, "most of it consisting of uninformed, emotional considerations".)

What Don Staheli did was consciously choose church policy, thus deigning it to supersede existing Massachusetts state law. In so doing he violated state law as well as denied my Human Rights as set forth in the Constitution. He offered no marriage counseling, no written or verbal alternatives to adoption, no information about legal resources, no advocacy, and no post-relinquishment counseling.

When, a year ago, I gave birth to a beautiful baby

boy, I requested he room-in with me. I breast-fed him for five days.

The day before Staheli brought the relinquishment papers for my signature, he "prepped" me over the phone twice saying, "Now the papers are long and involved. The language is harsh, but *we* will just have to put up with that and get through them". On the day of the signing, Staheli — instead of formally reviewing the document with me until he was sure I understood what I was expected to sign, criticized the harsh language in the papers clearly imparting the message, 'Don't pay any attention to it'.

The Massachusetts General Law Annotated states: "The surrender must be signed in the presence of a Notary Public and two witnesses, one of whom *must* be of the [birth parent/s] choosing." To my utter humiliation and certainly violating my right of privacy and confidentiality, Staheli brought in his wife (whom I'd never met) as one witness. By phone he then requested a member of my "host home" appear as the second witness. The latter thoroughly upset me, for they were the last people I wanted to see at a time that was at once the most traumatic and emotionally confusing of my life. Much as I absolutely did not want them present, without an advocate available I was denied knowing what my rights were and felt I had no 'say' in the matter.

Mid-way through the signing, I got up and left the room for the nursery to see my son one more time. Staheli insisted on going with me, denying me those few precious, final minutes alone with my son. Staheli's concern: "Close the deal."

I went to LDS Social Services for guidance and direction. They took advantage of my vulnerability, violated my rights, and gave me guilt. I placed blind trust in Don Staheli to provide me with sufficient information to make an informed decision about my future. Staheli honored my trust by lying by omission, and left me feeling robbed and raped.

Once the relinquishment papers were signed, Staheli dropped me like "a hot potato". In an age where the need for post-adoption counseling is recognized nationwide by competent social workers, I got none. I left the hospital empty-handed, spiraling into shock by the trauma of having lost my child, and then left alone to grieve a loss which is the equivalent (or worse) of losing a child to death.

Only on my return to Boston following my son's birth did I finally learn for the first time of the wealth of supportive alternatives and services available to pregnant teens and young adults who want to parent their children. It was a "Satisfaction Survey" Staheli presented to me — after the adoption was *final* — that clued me in to the fact I had any rights, he had had responsibilities, and that neither were addressed. I

began researching the law, OFC regulations — asking questions, making discoveries. And then I called the authorities who began investigating LDS SS.

Staheli ignored his responsibility to tell me places like MA Rehab & Employment Resources, Inc fund low-income people in training programs (like the one I am in now). He failed to tell me the Communities Development Corporations existed or that it creates and implements programs with goals like "Futures for Young Parents". He failed to tell me Day Care Centers exist and offer sliding-fee scales, and that some employment offices like MassJobs offer transportation reimbursement. He had a responsibility to tell me the WIC program existed, and he did not.

Mine is hardly an isolated case. On August 26, 1994 the Boston Globe published the following: "A single mother from Watertown claims Mitt Romney (Republican candidate for the MA senate) warned her a decade ago that she faced excommunication from the Mormon Church if she failed to follow her advice to give her newborn baby up for adoption through a Church agency [LDS]." The woman told her story because, "I was personally offended when he did it to me, but now we are talking about a whole constituency of people he is going to affect." She concluded the interview with, "If there is a God, I think the last thing He would have wanted is for me to give my son away just on somebody else's decision." The article was wrapped around a photograph of this mother and the child she refused to place for adoption.

I wrote Don Staheli a letter. He has not responded. He took a better job as Secretary to the 1st Presidency of the LDS Church. Recently I discovered Don Staheli was not licensed in Massachusetts as a social worker. He left the state days before it was mandatory to file his papers for licensing.

As of this date, the New England Agency has no director; they have a single social worker covering their five-state area.

Not long after my letter to Don was written, one of the LDS Commissioners for Social Services (Don's supervisor) came to see me. It struck me as rather remarkable he had come all the way from Salt Lake City. To see me?, I asked. He fidgeted, looked at the other man with him, stammered and said he was there "for lots of reasons". Sure he was. The agency was being investigated, and I stirred the pot. His patronizing demeanor was made worse by defending Don Staheli by telling me Don "did the right thing".

Was it also 'the right thing' to tell a couple who had recently adopted a child, "If you want to adopt another child, and you're willing to take a mixed baby, we'll give it to you for half-price"? I didn't bother to ask the Commissioner the question. I couldn't bear listening to his answer. I am disgusted and disheartened.

I LLINOIS
C OUNCIL FOR
A DOPTION
R EFORM AND
E DUCATION

P. O. Box 8393
NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS 60093

November, 1995

Dear Illinois Legislator:

The enclosed Petitions represent only the beginnings of a statewide campaign designed to heighten public awareness and gain support for opening sealed birth/adoption records in Illinois. Many states have already opened sealed birth/adoption records. This past year, Tennessee and British Columbia, Canada opened sealed birth/adoption records (see enclosed articles). Minnesota started opening sealed records in the 1970's and continues today with legislation to further open records. Alaska, Kansas and Alabama make identifying information available to adoptees on demand and an additional thirty-five (35) states permit the release of adoption information. Scotland has had unsealed adoption records since 1925 and Australia and New Zealand have opened sealed birth/adoption records.

Illinois lags behind with only a provision for a passive registry. Unlike our neighboring state of Indiana, the Illinois registry is not advertised anywhere and Illinois has no provisions for follow through should an inquiry be made. Indiana advertises its' registry with motor vehicle registration materials. More and more adults, affected by adoption, consider sealed birth/adoption records a CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE. We feel it is time for Illinois to open its' adoption records.

If you are interested in sponsoring Illinois legislation that will open sealed birth/adoption records, please contact ICARE, P. O. Box 8393, Northfield, Illinois 60093, 708/446-1615. We will help you with the necessary precedent setting research and statewide support from the membership of 20 plus Illinois search and support groups, as well as ICARE.

Sincerely,

Illinois Council for Adoption
Reform and Education (ICARE)



Memorial

University of Newfoundland

School of Social Work

October 25, 1995

The Legislators
State of Illinois
Springfield, IL
USA

Dear Legislator:

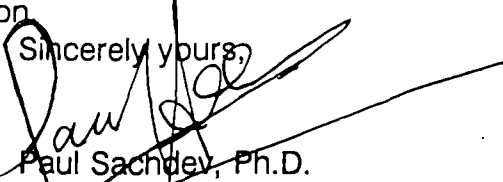
I am writing in support of the petition from ICARE (Illinois Coalition for Adoption Reform and Education) urging your legislative initiative for opening all sealed birth records in Illinois for adult adoptees 18 years of age or older. I am a professor of social work and have extensively researched and published in the areas of adoption disclosure and reunion. I am the author of two books: ADOPTION; CURRENT ISSUES AND TRENDS (1984) and UNLOCKING THE ADOPTION FILES (1989), both based on scientific data. I also acted as the consultant to the Government of New Zealand in their efforts to enact legislation in 1985 which permitted adult adoptees to seek information regarding their birthparents.

My studies as well as the research of other investigators unequivocally demonstrate that adoptees' desire to know about their birthparents and to connect with their generation line is ubiquitous, and that this knowledge is crucial for identity formation and personality development. Further, almost all the birth mothers in my studies conducted both in Canada and the U.S., whether they initiated the search or were found by their adult children, continued to have interest in the child they surrendered and wanted to know what had become of him/her even many years after separation. It is also clear that an open discussion on adoption and the adoptive parents' support of the adoptees' desire to know strengthens adoptive parent-child relationships and promotes mutual respect. Adoptees have reported improvement in adoptive relationships after they met their birthparents. Thus, the apprehensions concerning open records seem irrelevant and without scientific base.

Experience has shown that secrecy in adoption hardly serves the interests of the participants; instead it causes pain, grief and mistrust. I therefore urge you to undertake legislative initiatives so that Illinois could join the growing number of states in the U.S. and in Canada making it possible for adult adoptees to obtain without hindrance their birth records.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need further information at (709) 753-2323 by phone for further information.

Sincerely yours,


Paul Sachdev, Ph.D.
Professor

**ILLINOIS COALITION FOR
ADOPTION REFORM AND EDUCATION (ICARE)
PETITION FOR OPEN RECORDS**

To: Illinois Governor, State Representatives and Senators

"I support the opening of all sealed birth records in Illinois for adult adoptees 18 years of age and over, without hindrance by any governmental body, private agency, hospital, maternity home or person and with no more than the usual fee assessed to any other person obtaining such records. This includes any and all information relating to the birth of said person. FURTHER, I view the continuation of sealed birth records to be a violation of an adoptees civil rights. ICARE believes access to an individuals birth history is basic, innate and instinctual." For more information contact ICARE, 708/441-7581.

* Status AD-Adoptee BP-Birthparent AP-Adoptive Parent O-Other

Name	Street, State, Zip	Phone	Date	*Status
Judith Koptak	4536 Forest Downers Grove IL 60515	708-971-0780	8/29/94	BP
Don Hunt	23807 N. Lakeside 60047	708-458-5768	9/1/94	O
Kerry Roberts	732 N. Brockstone St Graylake 60030	708-223-2503		
Kathleen A. Quinn	1430 ALWOODA TR. ALHAMBRA, IL 60102	708-428-5734		
Lina LaPine	10389 Danville Rd #16 Glenview, IL 60025	708-297-6362	9-94	
Cynthia M. DeRose	3351 N Page Chgo, IL 60634			O
Cynthia R. Johnson	167 E Palatine Rd. Palatine 60067			O
Krista Love	1311 W GRANVILLE, CHICAGO IL 60660			O
Mary Kate	125 Cedar Ave Glenview, IL			AP
Robert O'Meara	800 WATERFORD CT., LAKE ZURICH, IL 60047			
Joyce Mahon	10389 Danville Glenview, IL 60025			
Mary Kubler	1217 N. Red Lake, #305, Arlington Heights, IL 60005			
Dr. Seaback	316 Gatewood Ln. Graylake IL 60030			

PLEASE RETURN TO: ICARE, 244 Latrobe Avenue, Northfield, Illinois 60093
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Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

BECKY PATRAS	2800 FREMONT ST	259-4389	8/29	B
Green Miller	3700 Cape Ct #109	635-7232	8/29/94	AD
JAMES P. STYER	249 TERRY AVE	833-4349	8/29/94	AD
Eileen R. Whitmire	38149 N. North Av	708-623-3138	8/29/94	BP
PATRICIA M. JIMENEZ	2419 N. TALMAN		8-29-94	O
Ellen Taylor-Sink	14402 WEST AVE	708-403-6976	8-29-94	AD
Brian Sink	14402 WESCAVE ORLAND PARK IL	708-403-6976	8-29-94	O
Erica Rupert	1145 S. Belmont	708-437-4448	8-29-94	O
Marcia Lungwitz	1372 Regency Lane Lake Villa IL 60046	708-223-1929		AD
Asharon L. Simpson	6110 N. Rockwell, Chicago, IL 60659	(312) 465-4220	8/29/94	AD
Raymond H. Gustafson	17W. 188 Hillside Lane Hinsdale Ill. 60521	(708)-325-1475	8/29/94	O
Marilyn Gustafson	17W 188 Hillside Lane Hinsdale Illinois 60521		8/29/94	
Simberlee Krawak	1867 Glenview, Ill. Palatine IL 60067	708-269		AD

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Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

Richard L. Madison 1500 Highland Ave Joliet, Il. 815-726-0563 8-29-94 AD
 Luann Madison 1500 Highland Joliet Il. 8-15-726-0563 8-29-94 AD
 Lynn Despot 2258 W. Walton St, Chicago (312) 276-3852 8-29-94 AP
 Marthony Longo 4780 St Joseph Creek #205, Joliet, Il (708)-852-2907 AD 8-29-94
 Dawn Tanico 1611 Maple Terrace #24 Lisle, IL. (708) 963-3865 AD
 Eileen Mengarelli 1042 White Mtn. Northbrook, IL 60062 708-272-3157
 Starla Jones Newark, IL 60062 708-272-2157 8/29/94 AD
 Nelda J. Donald 251 Vista Rd, Elmhurst, IL 60120 (708) 438-0147 B.
 Ruth Richards 412 Division St, Geneva, IL 60134 (708) 232-2118
 Marie Fraunberg 304 3rd St, Elmhurst, IL 60119 708-365-6166
 Jean Donelan 4720 Wallbank Ave Downers Grove, IL 60515 708-964-0288 BF
 Barbara Longo 906 S. John St. Prospect 60056 708-342-0000 BM
 Robert Longo 906 S. 10th St " " " " O

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Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

(Mrs.) Eunice C. Okuma	235 Norman Ct.	IL 60070	(708) 299-4805	8/29/94	social worker
Martin J. Bayer	504 Frankie Ct	Peapack Hts, IL 60070	(708) 670-8838		Physician.
Debra Kerpowicz	2609 Park St.	Rolling Meadows, ILL 60008	(708) 392-1389		RN
Cynthia Anderson	Pensuth Pl	Schaumburg, Ill		60/94	
Carlynn Davis	129 Arthur	Jas Lake, Ill 60020	708 697 5796		O
Kathy Thorsen	698 SHADY OAKS CT	ELGIN, ILL 60120			RN
Gyldia Olson	515 W. BURNINGTREE	Arlington Hts, IL 60004			O
Jay Coldebella	780 BLUE JAY CIRCLE	Elk Grove Village, IL 60007			O
Corliss Decatur	883 MARINATEER ESTATES	BARTLETT, ILL 60103			O
KAREN MILAWSKI	170 S. Waters Edge Dr.	Cicendo Hts, ILL 60139	Unit # 102		
Patty Eckard	624 Smith	Lisle, Ill 60532			O
Julie C Avolio	9142 N Greenwood	Des Plaines IL 60016			O
Kathy Furman	2415 Church St	Des Plaines IL 60016			O

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Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

Kelly Duggan 7130h Melvina Chgo, IL 60646 8/29/94 O

Laura Donnelly 8256 Hamlin Skokie, IL 60076 8/29/94 O

Patty Chiles 8557 Roseview Dr. Niles, IL 60714 8/29/94 O

Don Paganucci 9002 OLEANDER MORTON GROVE 8/29/94

Donna Allen 700 Greenwood Dr. Mt. Prospect 8/29/94 O

Quita Field 5117 W. Chase Skokie 677-0594 60077 - Adoptee

Penny Bonney 2518 Burr Oak, Blue Island 597-1712 60406 8/29/94 AP

Laura Bonney 2518 Burr Oak Blue Island IL 60406 O

Patricia Bonney 12247 AVERS AUSTIN IL 60658 8/29 AD

James P Bonney 2518 Burr Oak Ave Blue Island IL 60406 AP

Joan Arnette 9120 Chae Arthur Ct. Des Plaines

Tammie McCrea 6955 STANFORD DR. BRIDGEVIEW 8/24/94 (O)

Lana Oliver 10806 S. Lombard Chicago Ridge 60415 8-29-94 (AD)

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Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

Joelle Stensky 388 Forest Knoll Dr. Palatine 7059628 10/8/94 AD
David Ashberry 388 Forest Knoll Dr. Palatine, IL 60074-7059628-10/8/94 O
Laura Murray 1000 Hillman Ave., #2 Evanston, IL 60202 708.864.3147-C
David Weisley 4828 N. Bernard Chicago, IL 60625 312-267-6394
Edmund M. Egan 9410 S. 77th Ct Hickory Hills, IL 60457 708 430 8133
Gaylan Whelan 9410 S. 77th Ct Hickory Hills, IL 60457
Maggie Ruby RR#1 Box 40, New Berlin, IL 62670 217-787-9112
Jan Eros 437 Wyoming Bethalto IL 62010 618-377-7651
Karen Seander 2210 N. St #155 Bellvue IL 62221 618-235-9409
Ernest Thacker 1815 N. 36th Ave Stone Park, IL 60165 708-345-6263
RANDY KARTZ 1815 N. 36th Ave Stone Park IL 60165 (708) 345-6263
Pam Belcher 419 Marvin Wheeling, IL 60090 (708) 520-9514
Jay Fin 1437 Thacker Des Plaines IL 60016 (708) 824-3815

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Name	Street, State, Zip	Phone	Date	*Status
Connie Kiosse	7024 h. ridge ct. NW 60645	312-923-2554	8-15-94	B.P.
Ken Abraham	2127 Hawthorne Melrose Park, IL	708-451-1604	8/15/94	BP
Meg Jolley	719 W 17th Pl. Chicago	312-733-0703		BP
Amy Hahn	2519 N. St. Louis Ave. Evanston, IL	312-292-1668		Adoptee
Bonnie Bis	835 Ridge Ave #208 Evanston, IL	708/475-4095		BP.
Rhonda Present	1000 Nimrod Ave. Evanston, IL	708-864-3147		Adoptee
Lynne Zipes	3719 N. Vermity Chgo.	616-13		B.P.
Ann Chumawit	9546 Kildare Skokie, IL	600		
Ann M. Marshall	1322 Darro Evanston, IL	60201		
Ann Jolley	2148 W. Ashite Chicago	60625		
Karen Fishman	2148 W. Ashite Chicago	60625		
Ann Bonick	2029 Ridge Ave Evanston	60201		
Betty Sue Ester	1419 Grey Evanston	602		

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708/441-7581

**ILLINOIS COALITION FOR
ADOPTION REFORM AND EDUCATION (ICARE)
PETITION FOR OPEN RECORDS**

To: Illinois Governor, State Representatives and Senators

"I support the opening of all sealed birth records in Illinois for adult adoptees 18 years of age and over, without hindrance by any governmental body, private agency, hospital, maternity home or person and with no more than the usual fee assessed to any other person obtaining such records. This includes any and all information relating to the birth of said person. FURTHER, I view the continuation of sealed birth records to be a violation of an adoptees civil rights. ICARE believes access to an individuals birth history is basic, innate and instinctual." For more information contact ICARE, 708/441-7581.

* Status AD-Adoptee BP-Birthparent AP-Adoptive Parent O-Other

Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

John J. Schell 1326 Wesley Ave-9424 9/16/94

Sylvia W Jenkins 1900 Sherman #210 869-9217 BP

Jacob Brown 1217 Maple - Evanston, IL 60202
9-16-94 - (708) 328-4596

Strick McMahon 445 W. Wellington 122 Chicago 60657 312-529-1581 9/19/94 AD

ANDREW J. EPSTEIN 4550 N. Wolcott, Chicago 60640 9/16/94

Meg Halsey 719 W. 17th Pl. Chgo, IL 60616 9/19/94

AD Daniel Ekblad 2100 N Lincoln Pk W Chicago 60614 #585

Sue Head 442 Ardmore Villa Park 60181

Sauren Crafton 544 N. Lake Villa Park 60181

Larla Holbrook 1949 Whittingham Ln Hoffman Est. 60195 5-1-95 AD

Mary S. ... 2154 W BERTHEAU APT CHICAGO IL 60618

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* Status AD-Adoptee BP-Birthparent AP-Adoptive Parent O-Other

Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

~~John Jones 4501 Oakwood~~ 908-969-7357 9/21/94 O
Downers Grove, IL 60515
Janet Schletter 1250 Grace Ct. Downers Grove, IL 60516 708-964-7022 9/21/94 O
Bonnie L. Ledmann 907 Hickory, Downers Grove, IL 60515 708-963-2259 9/21/94 AP
Carol Conger 1108 Maple Ave Downers Grove, IL 60515, 708-969-1155 9/21/94 O
Bruce & Fay Corey 1820 Orchard, Downers Grove, IL 60515 708-964-7042 AP
Jan Kresl 1324 Maple Downers Grove, IL 60515 852-1557 9/21/94 O
Cindy Walther 6550 Dunham Downers Grove, IL 60516 908-8900 9/21/94 O
Peg Schultz 600 Davis Downers Grove, IL 60515 9/21/94
Jan Roberts 813 Old Orchard Downers Grove, IL 60515 9/21/94
Joan E. Ebersold - 1518 Ridgeland Circle Downers Grove, IL 60516 9/21/94
Joan Welsh 910 Elmhurst Rd. Prospect Heights, IL 60070 9/22/94 C

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708/441-7581

1808
008
9/1/77

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* Status AD-Adoptee BP-Birthparent AP-Adoptive Parent O-Other

Name Street, State, Zip Phone Date *Status

TAMMY RASMUSSEN 38713 N. US RTE 45 MILLBURN IL 60046 (708) 356-1096 10/1/94 AD

LARRY RASMUSSEN 38713 N. US RTE 45 MILLBURN IL 60046 (708) 356-1096 10/1/94 O

BRANDA DEGRAZIO 7334 38th AVE KENOSHA WI 53142 (414) 524-846 10/1/94 AD (in Illinois)

Donna Heale 1231 Casswell Elk Grove IL 60007 (708) 439-9177 10/2/94 O

Pam Davis 229 Brett Ct. Wauconda IL 60084 (708) 526-3331 10/6/94 O

Tim Dewel 14461 W. Kennecott Gurnee IL 60031 708 244 9586 10/6/94 O

Tim Scanlan 38713 N. US RTE 45 MILLBURN IL 60046 708 265-9847 10/6/94 O

Jeannie Scanlan 38713 N. US RTE 45 MILLBURN IL 60046 708 265-9847 10/6/94 O

Sylvia Schlegel 1902 Marshall Waukegan IL 60085 (708) 336-9498 10/12/94 A Grandparent

CHRISTINE BERRY 2116 WESTERN WAUKEGAN IL 60085 249-4685 10/1/94 O

Julie Andrews 36950 Rosedale Gurnee IL 60031 360-1083 O

Cynthia Bhimari 244 Latrobe Northfield IL 60093 708 441-7581 BP

Paul Bhimari 244 LATROBE NFD IL 60093 (O)

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* Status AD-Adoptee BP-Birthparent AP-Adoptive Parent O-Other

Name	Street, State, Zip	Phone	Date	*Status
Joan Silvia	6943 Howard Niles St	60714	708/647-8943	9/1/94
Darlene O. King	6644 W. RAVEN Chicago	60631	312/631-3205	9-1-94
Joan Miki	6354 W. Huntington Chicago	60068	312-763-1274	
Baren Gwendy	1422 Laverne Park Ridge	60068	708 825-6564	
Tref H. Cinger	1108 Maple - Downer Grove	60555	708-469-1155	
Koralina Vento	1500 Silver Ln	590-5305	8-29-94	O
RODNEY S MCGIL	120 N. OAK PARK AVE #216	(708) 445-1430	8/29/94	O
DON COVRIA	484 CHATTAHOOCY CR	67002	29 8/29/94	O
David Hanna	325 Weber Ct	516-4206	8/30/94	O
Jane Benson	413 S. Cedar St	60067	358-1788	8-30-94 O
Mayken Yule	4222 W. Kenwood St	60031	708 244-7074	8/30 BP

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708/441-7581**

STATE OF NEW YORK

10403 **B**

IN ASSEMBLY

MARCH 29, 1994

Introduced by M. of A. STRINGER Multi-Sponsored by -- M. of A. MEEKS, RAVITZ, RIVERA, SIDIKMAN, WRIGHT -- read once and referred to the Committee on Judiciary

AN ACT to amend the domestic relations law and the public health law, in relation to allowing certain adopted persons access to their original birth certificate

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The second undesignated paragraph of section 114 of the domestic relations law, as amended by chapter 559 of the laws of 1992, is amended to read as follows:

No person, including the attorney for the adoptive parents shall disclose the surname of the child directly or indirectly to the adoptive parents except upon order of the court. No person shall be allowed access to such sealed records and order and any index thereof except upon an order of a judge or surrogate of the court in which the order was made or of a justice of the supreme court. No order for disclosure or access and inspection shall be granted except on good cause shown and on due notice to the adoptive parents and to such additional persons as the court may direct. Nothing contained herein shall be deemed to require the state commissioner of health or his designee to secure a court order authorizing disclosure of information contained in adoption or birth records requested pursuant to the authority of section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-c or section forty-one hundred thirty-eight-d of the public health law; upon the receipt of such request for information, the court shall transmit the information authorized to be released thereunder to the state commissioner of health or his designee. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, an adopted person eighteen years of age or older shall be entitled to receive, upon request, an uncertified copy of that person's original (long form, line by line vault copy) birth certificate and any change the biological parents attach to the certificate.

Section 2. Section 4138 of the public health law is amended by adding two new subdivisions 8 and 9 to read as follows:

8. (a) An adopted person eighteen years of age or older, or a biological parent, may submit to the registrar a notice of change of name or address, such information shall be attached to the original birth certificate of the adopted person.

(b) The registrar shall disclose to a biological parent, at that parents request, the most current name and address of an adopted person if that person has requested so in writing.

9. Notwithstanding any provision of the law to the contrary, the registrar shall release to an adopted person a copy of their original birth certificate pursuant to section one hundred fourteen of the domestic relations law.

Section 3. This act shall take effect September 1, 1994.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [] is old law to be omitted.

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

Bill Number: Assembly 10403 Senate

Sponsors: Assembly Stringer
 Senate

TITLE OF BILL: AN ACT to amend the domestic relations law and the public health law, in relation to allowing certain adopted persons access to their original birth certificates.

PURPOSE OR GENERAL IDEA OF BILL: This bill would allow adopted adults to learn who their birth parents are when they reach their 21st birthday.

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PROVISIONS: This bill would amend section 114 of the domestic relations law and section 4138 of the public health law.

EFFECTS OF PRESENT LAW THIS BILL WOULD ALTER: See above.

JUSTIFICATION: There are currently over 6 million adoptees in the United States for whom most know nothing about their birth parents because of state laws which seal all adoption records. New York is one of those states.

Many of these laws were instituted in the 1930' and 40's to prevent the adoptee from being labeled "illegitimate" or "bastard." Social values have changed tremendously since those days and there is no longer the same stigma attached to adoption. The sealing of these records is now hurting the people they were designed to protect.

There are at least three fundamental reasons why adoptees should be allowed to find out who their birth parents were. First, adoptees are prevented from gaining access to medical information needed for preventive health care. As more and more illnesses are traced to genetic factors, adoptees should know what the medical history of their birth parents. Second, adoptees are denied the knowledge of their religious and ethnic heritage and third, they are denied the rights to know about their family history.

Opening adoption records for adults would give them some of the basic facts of their own existence which most people take for granted.

PRIOR LEGISLATIVE HISTORY: None.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS: None.

EFFECTIVE DATE: This act shall take effect September 1, 1994.

TENNESSEE PASSES SWEEPING ADOPTION REFORM LEGISLATION

In late May, 1995 Tennessee passed a history-making, comprehensive, 177-page revision of Tennessee's adoption law. This law passed the Tennessee House of Representatives by a vote of 99-0, and the Tennessee Senate by a vote of 30-2. (The Board vote was 28-2, but two senators off the floor at the time of the vote later recorded their votes in the yes column.)

This new law rewrites the rules of every aspect of adoption - birth mother's rights and responsibilities, birth father's rights and responsibilities, agency and LCSW and attorney guidelines and fees, preliminary and full home studies, foreign adoptions, termination of parental rights procedures, foster care regulation, post-adoption services, etc.

Of most immediate interest to AAC members, however, are the key elements of this law having to do with the disclosure of - and access to - adoption records and identifying information. Those key elements are as follows:

FIRST: ALL adoption records from the time period before March of 1951 (the effective date of our current adoption statute), specifically including the records of any and all Tennessee Children's Home Society adoptions regardless of their date of finalization, shall be made available - on request and as a matter of right - to all those affected: adoptees and/or their lineal descendants, adoptive parents, birth parents, and birth siblings, or the legal representatives of any of those persons.

Specifically included in this blanket coverage are "records in the office of the clerk of the adoption court; in the offices of the department of health; in the offices of any child-placing agency; in the state, district and county offices of the department of human services; or in any other informational source."

This provision also applies to records maintained on persons who were placed in prospec-

tive adoptive homes, but whose adoptions were never legally finalized.

The justification for this complete opening of pre-1951 adoption records is three-fold: no Tennessee adoption law before 1951 required the sealing of adoption records; the 1951 adoption law, which specified the sealing of records from that time forward, made no mention of the retroactive sealing of adoption records; the full-blown revelations in recent years of the nefarious practices of Georgia Tann and TCHS have had the effect of finally convincing public officials that it is in the best interest of all those affected by that operation to have full access to any records and information available.

This provision of the new law becomes effective July 1, 1995. Policies and procedures for the implementation of this provision are being developed now.

SECOND: For adoptions which have taken place after the provisions of the 1951 law went into effect, the principle (borrowed from the New South Wales Adoption Information Act of 1990) that "the right to information is equal to the right to privacy" will apply. Adoption records shall be made available - upon request and as a matter of right - to adult adoptees twenty-one years of age or older, or their legal representatives. Again, records referred to in this provision specifically include those held "in the office of the clerk of the adoption court; in the offices of the department of health; in the offices of any child-placing agency; in the state, district, and county offices of the department of human services; or in any other information source." (One exception applies: the records of home studies of adoptive parents will not be released. This exception is the result of a last-minute floor amendment in the Senate).

Although the above-specified records will be provided the adult adoptee as a matter of right upon request, **BEFORE** receiving the

records he/she must sign an affidavit to the effect that **IF** there is a contact-veto in the record - or **IF** on being located by DHS, the person being sought then places a contact-veto in the record - the adoptee will not contact the person who filed the contact-veto or make use of any other person or entity to make such a contact.

Any adoptee who violates such a contact-veto will be subject to both criminal and legal penalties, should the person whose right to privacy is violated elect to bring charges. (The criminal offense will be considered a Class B misdemeanor; the person whose right to privacy has been violated also will have "a cause of action in the circuit or chancery court for injunctive relief and damages, including both compensatory and punitive damages....")

A contact-veto will automatically apply to other family members of the person filing the contact-veto, but any such family member may override that veto by placing a consent-to-contact in the record, if he/she wishes to do so.

If there is no contact-veto in the record - and **IF**, on being located by DHS, the person being sought does not then file a contact-veto - or if the person being sought cannot be located by DHS, the requesting adoptee shall be under no further restrictions against pursuing contact.

Birth parents and siblings (adopted and un-adopted, full and half) may request identifying information about - and contact with - a related adoptee. However, the adult adoptee shall have the right to veto both contact and the release of identifying information about himself/herself, and the adoptive parents of a minor adoptee shall have the right to veto both contact and the release of identifying information about the minor adoptee.

Persons filing a contact-veto may "vary" that veto (i.e. agree to contact, but set condi-

tions as to when, where, and how; agree to the exchange of correspondence, pictures, updated information through an intermediary) or withdraw it at any time. There will be a space on the contact-veto form for the person vetoing the contact to explain why he/she is vetoing contact, or the conditions under which he/she will agree to contact.

This provision of the new law will become effective July 1, 1996. During the one-year period before it goes into effect, DHS will use public service announcements and other forms of media coverage to publicize the forthcoming change in law and services which will be available through the Department beginning on the effective date.

THIRD: One year after this provision goes into effect, DHS shall file a report with the Legislature concerning the use of the contact-veto, the frequency of violation of the contact-veto, and the number and nature of any complaints or objections to the contact-veto procedure received by the Department during the law's first year in effect.

FOURTH: Effective immediately, birth parents surrendering a child for adoption will be advised of their right to file either a contact-veto or a consent-to-contact, and of their right to vary or withdraw such a veto or consent at any future time.

NOTE: Fees will be charged for each of the services described above. The breakdown of those fees has not yet been determined by DHS.

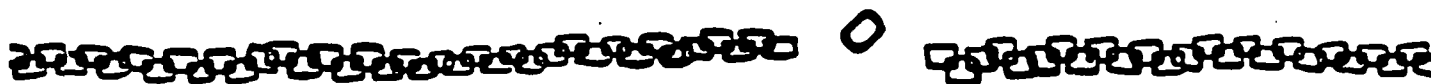
Denny Glad
President
Tennessee Coalition for Adoption Reform

Chain of Life

Issues in Adoption and Child Welfare

▲ SINCE 1989 ▲

P.O. Box 8081 • Berkeley, California 94707
Issue 36 • FALL 1995 • JANINE BAER, M.A., EDITOR

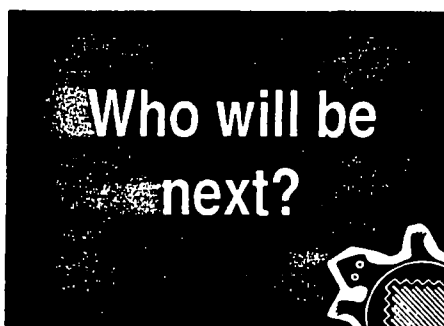


British Columbia Opens Records

Katherine Kimbell, co-chair of Adoption Reform Coalition of Ontario (ARCO) reported in the September *Parent-Finders* newsletter (National Capital Region) that on July 4 the Canadian province of British Columbia passed a bill permitting access to identifying information for adopted adults and birth parents. Adoptees can now obtain information about birth parents, including their names, and birth parents "will be able to access the adoption record to learn their child's name by adoption." Kimbell explained, "Both will also have services to assist with search and reunions. While these rights are qualified and not absolute, they are a major advance in Canadian social justice in adoption."

As in Tennessee, New Zealand, and other jurisdictions that have opened adoption records in the past decade, individuals seeking this information may be thwarted by a "veto" if the person being sought chooses to place one. British Columbia's new law provides for two different kinds of vetoes: a "disclosure veto," which allows a birth parent or adoptee to block access to their names, and a "no

contact declaration," which allows the seeker to obtain the missing person's name along with their request not to be contacted. Kimbell made no mention of whether there would be criminal penalties for contacting someone who requests



no contact as in Tennessee's new law. For more information, write to: *Audrey Scammell, c/o Triad Society for Truth in Adoption, 686 Hampshire Road, Victoria, B.C., CANADA V8S 4S2.*

Kimbell stated that ARCO "takes great hope from this new B.C. law" but "feels offering both a disclosure veto and a contact veto is not the best decision" because "no one person should have the right to veto access to personal information

by another person when that information is shared jointly by both....A contact veto, as developed satisfactorily in New South Wales, Australia, is sufficient." ARCO will continue to try to open records in the province of Ontario.

I have a personal connection to British Columbia: I was conceived there. My birth mother essentially fled Vancouver to protect herself from the social disapproval of unmarried pregnant women and I was born and adopted in Los Angeles while my birth mother returned to Canada. My birth father may still live in Vancouver. He was not happy that I found him there — he was concerned about maintaining his good reputation (as if my plan were to publicize the situation!) — but I did have the opportunity to meet him once, in 1984. While I am glad when any jurisdiction provides access to information for adoptees, I am particularly glad this change came to British Columbia.

Jean Paton wondered in her latest newsletter, "Has the Revolution Begun?" Will other states and provinces finally open their records one by one? Activists in New Jersey hope their state will be next.

— JB



National Adoption
Information Clearinghouse

11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 410
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 231-6512

Searching for Birth Relatives

Inside

- *Why People Search*
- *Ways to Get Help*
- *What's the Next Step?*
- *How Many People Search?*
- *How Long Will a Search Take?*

Some Things to Think About

Confidentiality in adoption has been the norm in this country since the 1930's. Traditionally, it has been perceived as beneficial to all sides of the adoption triad—the adoptive parents, the adoptee, and the birthparents. Adoption agencies have supported the policy of confidentiality, and as a result the practice of concealment is almost universal in the United States. Hawaii and Kansas are the only States that allow adult adoptees complete access to their birth and adoption information.

More recently, there has been more discussion about this issue. In years past, it was almost unheard of for adult adoptees to search for their birthparents, and for birthparents to search for the children they placed for adoption. However, in recent years, searching for birth relatives has become more frequent.

Self-help search organizations such as the Adoptee Liberty Movement Association (ALMA) promote adoptees' rights to search for their birthparents, and

birthparent support groups such as Concerned United Birthparents (CUB) encourage their members to search for their birth children if they so desire. The American Adoption Congress (AAC) is another organization that advocates for access to adoption information for all parties to an adoption who are at least 18 years old. These groups also support a policy of openness in current adoption practice. This means that at the time of an adoption birthparents and adoptive parents would share information directly or indirectly and possibly meet face-to-face. They could even agree to have some degree of ongoing contact over time.

Advocates for unsealing adoption records argue that sealed records allow adoptive parents the opportunity to deny the adoption and inhibit the birthparents' mourning of their loss. Proponents of sealed record adoption purport that confidentiality facilitates the uninterrupted bonding between children and their adoptive parents. Confidentiality is also

thought to protect birthparents from later intrusion into their lives by the child and to allow them to "put the past behind them" and to "go on with their lives." A traditional closed adoption alleviates the adoptive parents' apprehension that the birthparents may one day reappear to try to claim their child, and thus possibly cause confusion and turmoil for the child.

While controversy in the adoption community regarding access to birth records continues, adult adoptees and birthparents are taking matters into their own hands. Many of them wish to search for their birth relatives, and articulate various reasons for wanting to do so. If you are a birthparent, adoptee, adoptive parent, birth or adopted sibling, or anyone with a close connection to someone in these categories, the following reasons for wanting to search for birth relatives may sound familiar to you.

Why People Search

For some, the interest in searching is a matter of intense curiosity. They seek a sense of connection to someone of similar genetic makeup. They want to know if their birth relatives look like they do, speak as they do, or demonstrate similar gestures or body language. They want to know if they share similar characteristics such as a dry sense of humor, athletic or musical abilities, or an outgoing personality.

For others, searching is important for their emotional development. Some adoptees have a desire to know and understand why their birthparents made an adoption plan for them. They want to know if their birthparents ever regretted their decision or missed them. Birthparents, on the other hand, wish to tell their birth children the reasons and circumstances for placing them for adoption. Birthparents also wonder if the adoptive parents treated their child well, and if the child has been happy.

A third reason that adoptees and birthparents search is one that has engendered a lot of activity in the past few years — to share medical and genetic information. Both the National Academy of Sciences and the University of Maryland School of Social Work have recently held conferences on this topic. The conferences covered topics that included how to gather, store, and transmit genetic information in ways that would be beneficial to all parties. In many States, this reason is the only one that judges believe justifies the opening of sealed adoption records, and for which they will issue a court order to do so.

Ways to Get Help

Literature

Literature is growing on the adoptee and birth relative search movement. Many helpful books and articles have been written on the subject by adoptees, adoptive parents, birthparents, birth and

adoptive siblings, and professionals who work with them. If you are considering undertaking a search, familiarize yourself with this literature and gather all the helpful information you can. A bibliography of useful articles and books compiled by the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC) is provided at the end of this article.

In addition to these resources, a more complete list of relevant articles, including those most recently received by NAIC, may be requested. The articles address specific areas related to searching for birth relatives. An NAIC information specialist can help you determine your specific areas of interest.

Support Groups

People who have searched advise new searchers to begin the process with a realistic rather than an overly optimistic or pessimistic attitude. Searchers should be prepared for either positive or negative outcomes. As a prospective searcher, you should also be connected to a supportive individual or group with which to ventilate your feelings before, during, and after the search. The supportive individual might be a spouse, friend, or professional counselor. The supportive group might be a local or national self-help group that has been formed expressly for adoptees and/or birth relatives.

Support groups do not only provide emotional support. Members of these groups may also have helpful hints for you as to how to go about the search process. Hearing about another person's successful efforts would certainly provide encouragement for you as you consider the possibility of searching. The national groups are listed at the end of this article. For referrals to groups in your State or the State in which the adoption took place, contact NAIC.

Adoption Agencies and Social Service Departments

If you know the name of the agency through which your adoption was arranged, start your search by contacting the agency directly. If you do not know the name of the agency, the adoption division of your State or county department of social services might be able to help you. That agency can also tell you about the laws governing disclosure of adoption information in your State.

These laws vary from State to State, and sometimes change, as new legislation gets enacted. Within the last few years, new legislation has been introduced in several States, and it is likely that other States will be enacting legislation in the future. Some national adoption groups are deeply involved in the effort to get legislation enacted allowing all adult members of the

adoption triad access to adoption and birth information. The legislation generally is concerned with the type of information that can be revealed, the age and specific relationship to the adoption proceedings of the person requesting the information, and the procedures to be followed in obtaining the information.

In some States, it is possible to obtain birth data by contacting the Bureau of Vital Statistics. In a few States, a request for information can be made directly to the probate court in which the adoption proceedings were filed.

Registries

Some adoptees and birth relatives may not wish to undertake an active search for their relatives but are willing to be contacted if their relatives are looking for them. Mutual consent registries that match identifying information of adoptees and birthparents have been established in many States and by some national organizations. You provide your identifying information, current address, and telephone number to the registry. If anyone is looking for someone whose information matches yours, the staff of the registry put you together. In some States in which records are unconditionally sealed, these mutual consent registries are one of the only avenues open to you.

However, some adoption organizations have found these registries not to be very effective. The national registries are listed below with the other national organizations. You can contact NAIC to find out if your State has a state registry.

Search Consultants

Professional search consultants are individuals who have made searching for missing people, and specifically, searching for adoptees or birth relatives, their specialty. They charge fees for their services. It would be important if you hire one to check his or her credentials thoroughly and ask for references from former clients. Before you hand over a retainer fee, you want to be sure that you are dealing with a reputable person.

Computer Networks

The latest computer technology is now also being used by those who are searching. Many of the commercially available online services have adoption forums or mailing lists. They may have forums for general discussion on adoption, as well as specific areas for adoptees, birthparents, or adoptive parents. Some contacts for these are listed at the end of this article. Note: For those for whom the Internet information is a foreign language, either find a friend who knows about it to help you, or contact one of the other services for help in entering

this route of the information superhighway.

What's the Next Step?

Once you gather background information and get help from all these sources, you may still be left searching on your own.

What's the next step? If you are an adoptee, you might want to talk to your adoptive parents and other relatives who may remember details that would help you to put the pieces together. You will want to be tactful in the way you phrase your questions. Birthparents might discuss possibilities with individuals who were confidants at the time of the adoption. You will have to think creatively and not necessarily logically to come up with appropriate strategies for your search.

Birth, death, marriage, divorce, school, church, genealogy, health, military, and property records can be useful, so use them. Newspaper articles and classified ads in personal columns may also be helpful. Some search organizations publish newsletters or magazines with personal columns as well. Keep accurate notes throughout the process. You never know which seemingly insignificant detail, when added with another one, will be the breakthrough clue for you.

For instance, one adult adoptee was able to find out which high

school her birthmother attended. She then located the yearbooks for that school for her birth year and the years before and after her birth. She pored over the photographs of all the students until she zeroed in on the one she felt was her birthmother. She was correct!

How Many People Search?

One source states that more than 60,000 Americans are searching for birthparents or children from whom they were separated as a result of adoption. Another source states that only 1 to 2 percent of adoptees search for their birthparents, while still another source states that 10 to 15 percent of adoptees engage in an active search. It is difficult to obtain an accurate assessment of the number of searchers in the United States and, of that number, how many actually locate their relative and establish contact. It is known that more female adoptees search for their birthparents than males do, and that usually it is the birthmother for whom they search first, especially if they were adopted as an infant. The growing numbers of search organizations indicate that more people are interested in searching than ever before. The NAIC certainly receives many inquiries on the subject, which is why this factsheet was developed. The important point is, if you feel a search is the right thing for you to do, you should do it.

Furthermore, if you need help, it is available for you.

How Long Will a Search Take?

There is no pat answer to the question of how long a search will take. It will depend on the availability of reliable sources of information, the laws in the State in which the adoption took place, the amount of help and resources you have, and various other factors. Again, if it turns into a long and difficult process, you will be glad you have your support network ready to see you through it.

Some Things to Think About

If you decide to conduct a search for a birth relative, you are sure to experience many different emotions. Fear, guilt, anger, anxiety, and exhilaration all may play a part. The phase of life you are in at the time of the search may be an important factor, too, especially if you have recently experienced a major life event such as a marriage, divorce, birth, or death. You may change your mind about your decision to search more than once, or do some work on the search for a while and then suddenly stop. This is understandable and quite normal.

You might want to give some thought to or discuss with your support network what might occur or what you would like to occur if your search is successful. Do you intend to have an ongoing relationship with the person you find, as much as time, distance, and resources allow? Do you want the person you find to meet the people who are significant in your life at the present time? Do you want to meet the people who are significant to the person you find? How might your finding each other affect them? Do you want to satisfy your curiosity, briefly, and then move on?

The last question is very important. If all you want to do is satisfy your curiosity, you could cause more pain than if you never established contact. If the medical or genetic information is important to you, but an actual relationship is not, perhaps you should arrange for a third party or the adoption agency to obtain that for you. The literature on searching indicates that once birth relatives are found, they want to stay in touch. Therefore, think through very carefully how much contact you might or might not want to have with the found person over time. If you think you might be willing to stay in touch and maintain the relationship, expect some rough spots along the way. This is new territory for both of you. It might take a couple of years of living through birthdays,

holidays, and Mothers' Days or Fathers' Days together before you find a level of contact or participation in each others' lives that feels comfortable.

When you conduct a search, the information you acquire may be positive or negative. If you are able to meet your birth relatives, they may be thrilled to know you or less than welcoming. You must be prepared for things to go either way. However, most searchers say that knowing as much as possible about their birth relatives provides a feeling of closure and satisfaction that cannot be duplicated. Good or bad, knowing your history or the outcome of your earlier actions hopefully will be helpful to you. Maybe if you learn only one crucial piece of information, it will be enough to give you a peace of mind that you did not have before the search.

Remember, a decision not to search is absolutely fine. However, if you decide to take the risk, may it be an enlightening and rewarding journey for you. If NAIC can help you in any way (see box below), please call or write again.

*Written by Debra G. Smith, ACSW,
Director, NAIC
Originally published 1990; revised
February 1995*

Information on Searching Available from NAIC

1. Search and support groups in your State and/or the State in which the adoption took place.
2. Information on State mutual consent registries.
3. Information on State adoption laws.
4. A more extensive bibliography on search literature.

Nationally Based Adoption Search Resources

*Adoptee Liberty Movement Association (ALMA)
P.O. Box 727, Radio City Station
New York, NY 10101-0727
(212) 581-1568

*American Adoption Congress (AAC)
1000 Connecticut Ave., N.W.,
Suite 9
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 483-3399

National Organization for Birthfathers & Adoption Reform (NOBAR)
1139 Bal Harbor Blvd., Suite 184
P.O. Box 50
Punta Gorda, FL 33951
(813) 637-7477

Birthparent Connection
P.O. Box 230643
Encinitas, CA 92023-0643
(619) 753-8288

*Concerned United Birthparents (CUB)
2000 Walker St.
Des Moines, IA 50317
1-(800)-822-2777 or (515) 263-9558

*Council for Equal Rights in Adoption
401 East 74th St., Suite 17D
New York, NY 10021
(212) 988-0110

International Soundex Reunion Registry
P.O. Box 2312
Carson City, NV 89702
(702) 882-7755

Musser Foundation
P.O. Box 1860
Cape Coral, FL 33910
(813) 542-1342

National Adoption Registry
6800 Elmwood Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64132-9963
(816) 361-1627 or (800) 875-4347

People Searching News
P.O. Box 100444
Palm Bay, FL 32910-0444
(407) 768-2222

Reunions, The Magazine
P.O. Box 11727
Milwaukee, WI 53211-1727
(414) 263-4567
Fax (414) 263-6331

Re-Unite
P.O. Box 7945
Aspen, CO 81612
(303) 927-2400

Foreign Search/Support

Adoptee Foreign Search
18460 Bishop Lane
Cleveland, OH 44136

ALMA - England
P.O. Box 10
Rainham Essex
UK RM13 8JZ
0708 55 6961

Birthlink
Family Care
21 Castle Street
Edinburgh EH2 3DN
Scotland
031 225 6441

Geborener Deutscher
805 Alvarado Dr. N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87108

*These national organizations may be able to refer you to local organizations near you.

Newsletters, Magazines, and Computer Networks for People Interested in Adoption

Newsletters

Birth Mothers of Minors
(B.M.O.M.S.)
Cherokee Station
P.O. Box 20510
New York, NY 10021
(212) 532-4104

Birthparents Today
3423 Blue Rock
Cincinnati, OH 45239
(513) 741-0929

CUB Communicator
Concerned United Birthparents (CUB)
2000 Walker St.
Des Moines, IA 50317
1-(800)-822-2777 or (515) 263-9558

The Decree

American Adoption Congress
1000 Connecticut Ave., N.W.,
Suite 9
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 483-3399

On the Vine

Sweet Pea Press
P.O. Box 1852
Appleton, WI 54913-1852

Open Adoption Birthparent

721 Hawthorne St.
Royal Oak, MI 48067
(810) 543-0997

People Searching News

P.O. Box 100444
Palm Bay, FL 32910-0444
(407) 768-2222

Magazines

Adoptive Families

Adoptive Families of America
3333 Highway 100 North
Minneapolis, MN 55422
(612) 535-4829

Pact Press

3315 Sacramento St., Ste. 239
San Francisco, CA 94118
(415) 221-6957

Reunions, The Magazine

P.O. Box 11727
Milwaukee, WI 53211-1727
(414) 263-4567

Roots and Wings

c/o Cynthia Peck
30 Endicott Dr.
Great Meadows, NJ 07838
(908) 637-8899

Computer Networks

AdoptionNetwork
2312 N. Wakefield
Arlington, VA 22207
(202) 755-7420 or
(703) 803-4987

America Online

8619 Westwood Center Dr.
Vienna, VA 22182-2285
(800) 827-6364 or
(703) 893-6288

CompuServe

5000 Arlington Centre Blvd.
P.O. Box 20212
Columbus, OH 43220
(800) 487-8990

Prodigy

P.O. Box 8129
Gray, TN 37615
(800) PRO-DIGY
(800) 776-3449

WOMB BBS

c/o 805 Alvarado Dr. N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87108

On the Internet

Mailing Lists

- Triad (Adoptive Parents, Birthparents, Adoptees)
Contact: owner-adoption@listserv.law.cornell.edu
- Birthmothers (ONLY) Contact:
nadir@acca.nmsu.edu

- Birthparents

To subscribe send E-mail:
LISTSERV@indycms.iupui.edu
Type in body of text
SUB BRTHPRNT
firstname lastname
• Adoptees (ONLY)
Contact: hartung@crl.ucsd.edu

Newsgroups

General Discussion: alt.adoption

Persons Interested in Adoption:
alt.adoption.agency

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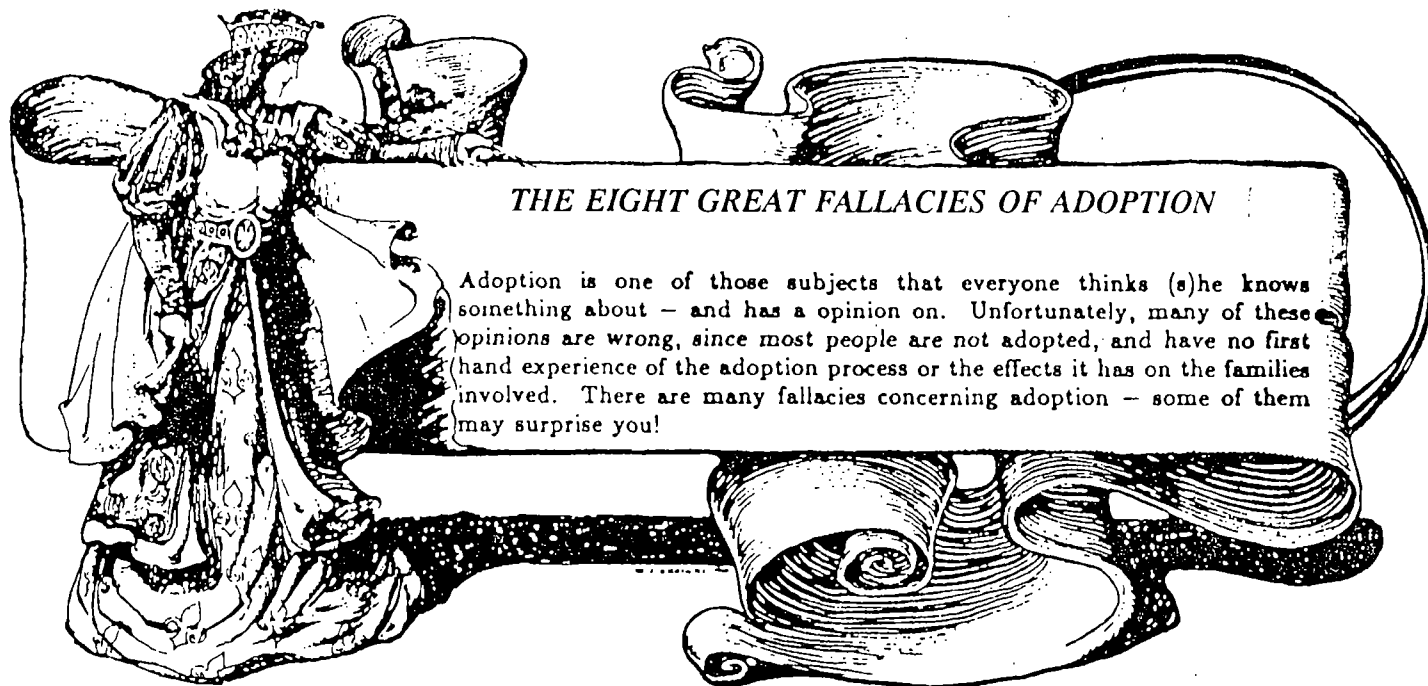
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THE EIGHT GREAT FALLACIES OF ADOPTION

Adoption is one of those subjects that everyone thinks (s)he knows something about — and has a opinion on. Unfortunately, many of these opinions are wrong, since most people are not adopted, and have no first hand experience of the adoption process or the effects it has on the families involved. There are many fallacies concerning adoption — some of them may surprise you!

ONE

ADOPTIVE PARENTS MAKE BETTER PARENTS THAN ORDINARY PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY WANTED A CHILD SO BADLY AND WENT TO SO MUCH TROUBLE TO GET ONE.

Actually, adoptive parents are no better and no worse than any other parents. The idea that just wanting a child makes anyone into a good parent is shallow. It's the amount of time, thought, love and labor that goes into raising a child that distinguishes the good parents from the poor ones. Most parents, adoptive or not, do their honest best for the children they care for. To expect parents to be extra good at parenting just because they adopted is to burden them with impossible standards to live up to, and this can place a strain on the relationship in the family. It must also place a strain on the adoptee who feels that he must reflect this "superior" parenting in his accomplishments.

TWO

HAPPY ADOPTEES, WHO ARE COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH THEIR PARENTS AND HOME WILL NEVER WANT TO SEARCH FOR THEIR BIRTH KIN; ONLY THE UNHAPPY AND MALADJUSTED WILL FEEL A NEED TO SEARCH.

The reverse is true. Dr. Wm. Reynolds found that there was no correlation between satisfaction with the adoptive parents and a desire to search. Searching indicates no more than a strong desire for knowledge on the part of the searcher — it is not an indication of rejection of the adoptive family. In fact, the adoptee who feels secure and wanted in his family may search for the truth of his past, knowing that he will lose nothing in the process and may gain a great deal. The unhappy adoptee may not care to risk his precarious relationships with his family and decide not to search.

Furthermore, since all adoptees are curious from time to time, to one degree or another, to believe this fallacy is to do a great disservice to the adoptive parents; most adoptees insist that they are not searching for replacements, and are quite happy with the families they have.

THREE

ADOPTEES WHO SEARCH ARE LOOKING FOR FANTASY, THE "PERFECT PARENTS" WHO WILL LOVE AND CHERISH THEM, AND THEY WILL INEVITABLY BE CRUELLY DISAPPOINTED WHEN THEY MEET WITH REALITY.

This is the natural conclusion of Fallacy No. Two; since adoptees are "dissatisfied" with what they have, they must be looking for the impossible dream. Truthfully, the only thing that adoptees who search are NOT looking for is fairy tales! They are tired of fantasizing, wondering, thinking; they are seeking the truth. Of course, they would not be human if they did not hope that what they find will be pleasant, but they know very well that it could end in disappointment. If they were looking for dreams, they would not need to search at all — dreams are easy to come by.

FOUR

A SEARCHING ADOPTEE POSES A REAL THREAT TO THE SECURITY AND ANONYMITY OF THE BIRTH PARENTS.

To believe this one, you must also believe that people who have been raised as adopted members of their families are all incompetent, insensitive, immature idiots who could not be taught by parents or anyone else to care about the rights and feelings of others. This is a belief that indicates a deep lack of faith in adoption, that seems to say that adoption is a system of child welfare that takes normal, healthy children and turns them into emotionally crippled adults.

What people do not seem to realize is that an adoptee has no reason to be so thoughtless and inconsiderate. How much information could a searcher get from a shocked, angry or frightened birth parent? The adoptees must be careful, for their own sakes as well as for the sake of the birth parents.

(continued)

FIVE

AN ADOPTEE BELONGS TO HIS NEW FAMILY FOREVER - AND OWES THEM SOMETHING MORE THAN THE ORDINARY OFFSPRING OWES HIS FAMILY.

Correction, please: an adoptee will be a part of the people who love him forever, but "belonging" is a term used for property. An adoptee owes his or her parents nothing more and nothing less than (s)he would if (s)he had actually been born to them. To insist otherwise is to put the adopted into a special class. It is to transform children who are "beneficiaries" of this service into objects of charity. It is actually a self-pitying plea for gratitude, not an honest recognition of the human relationships that have grown over the years.

Actually, it was the parents who asked to be allowed to adopt, not the child who was asking for a family. These parents wanted to have the pleasure of watching a young life grow, much as any other parents would. They did not adopt (we hope) as a social statement, or as a "good deed", and they have benefited from the relationship as much as the child. Adoptive parents cannot and should not expect more than ordinary parents are allowed by custom and law to expect.

SIX

SEALED RECORDS PROTECT THE BIRTH MOTHER FROM INTRUSION INTO HER LIFE OF THE CHILD SHE GAVE AWAY.

Sealed records protect no one, least of all the birth parent. Sealed off from any knowledge of the child she lost, ignorant of conditions in the adoptive home, unable to get the slightest information from the placing agency, she cannot know if her son or daughter is curious about her or if the grown adoptee is searching.

Every day, millions of adoptees are searching in this country for evidences of their births and ancestry. And they are finding, in spite of sealed records, uncooperative agencies and courts, and discouragement from every side. With no way to communicate with the birth mother, they hesitantly, tentatively reach toward her. At any moment, the telephone or the mailman can shatter the birth mother's illusion that sealed records are her protection.

Most birth mothers did not ask for this protection, did not want it, and are delighted when their grown son or daughter seeks them out. There are very few birth mothers who did not give up their child with grief and deep regret. Most of them would have preferred to keep their child, if that had been possible at the time.

Sealed records, whatever you may have heard about them, were actually designed to keep the adoptive parents happy - free from the worry that someone would take their hard-won child away from them. Sealed records assure adoptive parents that they are indeed "real."

SEVEN

ADOPTees ARE BETTER OFF NOT KNOWING THAT THEY ARE ADOPTED. THEY WILL THEN NEVER NEED TO SEARCH, AND WILL NOT GROW UP FEELING "DIFFERENT."

This fallacy offers an illusion of kindness, but is actually the most cruel of them all. The truth is that a secret cannot be kept forever. The adopted always find out, sooner or later. And even when they are unaware of their status as an adopted member of the family, they do frequently feel "different", without knowing why. When they do find out, often by accident, they discover at once that nothing they have believed or been taught is true, and that the people they have trusted all their lives have been systematically lying to them. It is a shattering discovery that can rip their world to shreds. Adoptive parents need to armor their child against this kind of destructive damage by being honest about the adoption. It is better for the adoptee to hear the truth from the ones (s)he trusts and so be able to accept it comfortably. It is also without doubt better to learn about adoption when very young, especially when the child is allowed to continue to ask for and get truthful answers to questions as (s)he grows.

EIGHT

AN ADOPTEE IS BOUND BY THE AGREEMENT OF ADOPTION; HE HAS A RIGHT ONLY TO THE INFORMATION THAT OTHERS ARE WILLING TO GIVE. HE MUST NEVER CHALLENGE THE WISDOM OF THE SEALED RECORD.

Bound by what? Why should an adoptee be required to honor an agreement he never saw, never read, and never agreed to? As a slave was obligated to look after his master's property (himself), so the adopted are asked to keep promises made by others on their behalf. In most states, an adoptee is not ever permitted to see the records of an event that has profoundly changed his life.

Where ordinary parents know and expect that they will see their minor children grow into independent adults, capable of making decisions and managing their own lives, some adoptive parents seem to require that the control they have over their children should extend over the child's entire life. No matter how old that "child" becomes, he will never be old enough to decide for himself how much he wants to know, and never will be old enough to be trusted with the entire truth.

As one adoptee said, "I will honor any contract or agreement that I myself have read, understood, and signed. But I did not and will not agree to lose my rights through an agreement signed by others years ago. I never agreed to anything."

Too many of our states still carry on their books laws that reflect these antique and prejudicial attitudes toward adoption and adoptees. It is high time that a fresh breath of common sense should blow the cobwebs off these laws so people can see them for what they are - monuments to ignorance and fear.

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Provided by Vanda Wilson, Lafayette, IN

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORS

In the past year, ICARE supporters have been financially generous. This has allowed ICARE to obtain a post office box, cover photocopying expenses, purchase business cards, advertising, office supplies and postage in order to remind legislators of our concerns and keep you all informed, and ICARE hosted a successful conference which included start up costs of postage, copying, meals for the keynote speaker, fees for conference site and so on. In approximately 1 - 1/2 years ICARE has made a difference in Illinois but, our road is not completely paved.

With that in mind, to help commemorate National Adoption Awareness Month in November, ICARE is currently working on assembly of a packet of progressive information concerning adoption to be distributed to Illinois legislators. The information will be varied but, mostly focus on the Illinois surrender process and open records. We have determined the presentation will be an expandable manilla folder contained in a gray envelope, with an outside label that will possibly read something like, "CONFIDENTIAL -- SEALED RECORDS". Our aim is to provide information to legislators that can be easily extracted by the piece as interest or need arises and to provide information that can be incorporated and added to at a later date. To save on postage, where possible, the folders will be hand delivered. However, there will be photocopying expenses and miscellaneous costs associated with office supplies and assembly.

ICARE is hoping our supporters will be generous this Fall in making donations. Any donation will be appreciated to help us cover the costs of our Fall project to further our mission of providing quality and accurate adoption information to legislators and others who will ultimately help us make changes.

Thank you for your help and support.

Sincerely,

Cindy Bonnie Ken

Cindy Bonnie Ken

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to P. O. Box 8393, Northfield, Illinois 60093

Name: _____
Address: _____
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Questions? Please call 708/446-1615
Thank you for your support. Your donation is NOT tax deductible.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 17, 1995 ICARE FUNDRAISER 6:30 - 8:30 PM
"THOUGHTS ON ADOPTION", A READING OF ORIGINAL WRITINGS
SINGLE TICKET - \$7.50 OR TWO TICKETS FOR \$12.00
LOCATION: 835 RIDGE, PARTY ROOM, EVANSTON, FOR RESERVATIONS
CALL: 708/446-1615

SEPTEMBER 27 - OCTOBER 1, 1995 CERA CONFERENCE, NEW YORK
CONTACT: 212/988-0110

OCTOBER 21, 1995 FALL ADOPTION CONFERENCE, "THE HEALING POWER
OF THE FAMILY", MENOMONIE, WISCONSIN, CONTACT: 715/833-0992

NOVEMBER 1 - 5, 1995 CONCERNED UNITED BIRTHPARENTS NATIONAL RETREAT
CONTACT: 1-800-456-6244

NOVEMBER 5, 1995 "UNDERSTANDING ADOPTION: A LIFELONG JOURNEY"
SCHAUMBURG, ILLINOIS, CONTACT: 708/459-0677

URGENT ... ACTION ALERT!!

United States Congress Representative, Deborah Pryce, of 221 Cannon, House Office Building, Washington, D. C. 20515 has proposed federal legislation that, according to the *Adoptive Families Magazine*, July/August 1995 issue, would modify the Indian Child Welfare Act to require the heritage of a Native American child to be established at birth. Retroactive effects of admission to tribal membership would be disallowed if HR 1448 becomes law. According to the Representative's office, as of August 25, 1995, the bill has progressed through hearings and debate. It was introduced in the Senate as bill number S 764. At the moment, Representative Pryce's office is looking for co-sponsors and hoping to attach the bill to another piece of legislation that will pass into law the first week of October, 1995. Please write Representative Pryce at the above address or call her office at, 202/225-2015 to express your opposition. Representative Pryce is a former Judge and an adoptive parent. Also, you might want to call the U. S. Congress docket room at 202-225-3456 for a copy of HR 1448 or, call 202-225-3121 to learn the identification of your U. S. Congressperson and please write that person as well.

ICARE supports family preservation and recognizes the significance of the Indian Child Welfare Act. ICARE believes the Indian Child Welfare Act supports biological connections to family of origin and discourages possible exploitation and coercion that often times exists in the arena of infant adoption. Modification of the Indian Child Welfare Act, such as HR 1448, would be a step back in time by ignoring the ethnic and cultural ties to one's background. We have been in touch with Pat Tyson at the Illinois office of Indian Affairs. Native Americans across the country view passage of the above legislation as a move to dismantle the Indian Child Welfare Act, they are more than concerned. If you want to help please call Pat Tyson at 312/784-1050. In Illinois, a distressed Native American mother recently won custody and return of her baby. She had surrendered her infant to adoption via the Easter House agency in Chicago. The Easter House has been operating on a temporary license for more than a decade. It is our belief that, in this case, the surrender was obtained by coercive methods. If HR 1448 were to pass into law, that Illinois mother would NOT have been able to regain custody of her child. You may wonder why HR 1448 and S 764 is important to all adoption reformers. First, and foremost, it is important that we all support each other and secondly, the Indian Child Welfare Act could be a vehicle we can all use as precedent setting legislation for overall reform. If the Act is dismantled we will no longer have it as a model, plus we will have lost valuable history lessons. ICARE is opposed to HR 1448 AND S 764.

*** ICARE NEWSLETTER Winter issue deadline -- December 15, 1995. Mail all political action, informational, or calendar type submissions to: ICARE, P. O. Box 8393, Northfield, Illinois 60093. The next issue will be mailed January, 1996. ***

AN EVENING WITH REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY

BY *BONNIE BIS*

IN THIS UPHILL BATTLE OF ADOPTION REFORM, UPON WHICH WE'VE EMBARKED, IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHO YOUR ALLIES ARE. WE'VE DISCOVERED AT LEAST ONE FRIEND IN THE THE ILLINOIS LEGISLATURE, REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY (D-EVANSTON), WITH WHOM I AND TWO OTHER ICARE SUPPORTERS/CONSTITUENTS MET WITH ON A SWELTERING EVENING IN AUGUST.

JAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CHAMPION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, AND ATTENDED THE FIRST ICARE PUBLIC MEETING LAST JUNE, 1994. SHE RECENTLY OFFERED TO MEET WITH US TO ASSIST IN DEVELOPING A PLAN TO EDUCATE THE LEGISLATORS ON OUR ISSUES. SINCE WE'VE CHOSEN TO TARGET THE SURRENDER PROCESS AS OUR FIRST REFORM ISSUE, WE WANTED TO APPEAL TO THE BASIC INEQUITIES IN THE SURRENDER PROCESS, BY PROPOSING THE FOLLOWING CHANGES:

1. EXTEND THE 72 HOUR PERIOD BEFORE SURRENDER PAPERS ARE SIGNED BY THE SURRENDERING MOM.
2. ESTABLISH A REVOCATION PERIOD DURING WHICH THE BIRTHMOTHER CAN CHANGE HER MIND.
3. PROVIDE FOR INDEPENDENT COUNSELING OF AVAILABLE OPTIONS TO ENABLE THE BIRTHMOTHER TO REACH AN INFORMED DECISION.
4. IF ADOPTION IS THE CHOICE, PROVIDE THE BIRTHMOTHER WITH AN ADVOCATE TO REPRESENT HER IN ARRANGING THE ADOPTION.

JAN GRACIOUSLY GAVE US TWO HOURS OF HER TIME AND ATTENTION THAT EVENING, AND WE CAME AWAY WITH MUCH TO THINK ABOUT CONCERNING OUR APPROACH. WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT FOR OUR CAUSE, I BELIEVE, IS NOT TO BE PERCEIVED AS ANTI-ADOPTION BUT, RATHER TO APPEAL TO THE BASIC INEQUITIES TO MOTHERS AND CHILDREN IN THE CURRENT ADOPTION SYSTEM AND IN THE END, MAKE ADOPTIONS SAFER FOR EVERYONE. NO ONE WANTS TO SEE ANOTHER BABY JESSICA OR BABY RICHARD CASE, AND MOST ADOPTIVE PARENTS DO NOT WANT A BIRTHMOTHER WHO IS NOT COMMITTED TO HER DECISION. OUR PROPOSAL WOULD PROVIDE FOR AN "INFORMED CHOICE" FOR BIRTHMOTHERS.

IF YOU HAVE HAD ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS, PLEASE WRITE AND LET US HEAR ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES. WE HAVE OTHER MEETINGS WITH VARIOUS REPRESENTATIVES IN MIND, AND ARE INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHAT OTHER "ALLIES" YOU HAVE FOUND IN ILLINOIS GOVERNMENT.

THE NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

According to the Utne Reader, July/August, 1995 issue, The National Fatherhood Initiative has been founded by Don E. Eberly, a former White House aide. Mr. Eberly believes, "that men must commit themselves to their children, and that communities in turn must commit to supporting and encouraging good fathers." To connect with NFI, contact: 600 Eden Road, Bldg E, Lancaster, PA 17601; 717/581-8860; FAX 717/581-8862.

MEDIA FAX LIST AND E-MAIL ADDRESSES

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BOLINGBROOK SUN		708-759-1726	CBS		212-975-1519
BRIDGEPORT NEWS		312-842-5087	CBS NEWS		312-951-3321
BUSINESS WEEK		312-816-3366	CLTV		708-368-4468
CHAMPAIGN GAZETTE		217-359-5374		NEWS	cltvip@aol.com
CHICAGO BUSINESS REVIEW		312-651-1430	CNN		312-341-3020
CHICAGO CATHOLIC		312-243-1526	NBC		312-645-8560
CHICAGO CITY HALL PRESS ROOM		312-744-8824	WBBM (2)		312-527-0913
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CHICAGO JEWISH STAR		708-874-0014		GEN. MANAGER	312-651-3259
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CHICAGO MAGAZINE		312-222-0699		STATION	wbbmch2@aol.com
CHICAGO PARENT		708-524-0447		BILL KURTIS	kurtisanex@aol.com
	EDITOR	ChiParent@aol.com			312-433-3839
CHICAGO POST		312-463-5544	WCFC (38)		312-705-2876
CHICAGO REPORTER		312-427-8130	WCIU (26)		
CHICAGO SHORELINE NEWS		312-928-6056	WFLD (32)		
CHICAGO SUN-TIMES				NEWS	312-819-0420
	FEATURE	312-321-3679		GEN. MANAGER	312-819-0820
	NEWS	312-321-3084			312-528-6050
	NEWS	312-321-3096	WGN (9)		wgntv@aol.com
	RICHARD ROEPER	Speedy555@aol.com		STATION	Garry@interaccess.com
	DENNIS BRYNE	DenAFame@aol.com		GARRY MEIER	312-750-7050
	ART GOLAB	artgolab@delphi.com			
CHICAGO TRIBUNE			WLS (7)	NEWS	312-527-5925
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CHICAGO UNION TEACHER		312-329-6200	OPRAH		312-633-1111
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	LISLE	708-955-0895			
	VERNON HILLS	708-680-0189	WBBM-AM		312-651-3674
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	JACK MABLEY	yelmab@aol.com		DICK HELTON	radioguy@aol.com
DAILY NORTHWESTERN		708-491-9905		CRAIG DELLIMORE	73300.3660@compuserve.com
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FEELEY NEWS BUREAU		708-251-7188		HOWARD STERN	Howl Stern@aol.com
GAY CHICAGO MAGAZINE		312-327-0112	WGM		
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ILLINOIS LEGAL TIMES		312-654-3525		NEWS	312-222-5977
INSIDE CHICAGO		312-784-8084		BOB COLLINS	Chicago Online: Bob WGN
KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE		708-232-4962		SPIKE O'DELL	spikeo@aol.com
LEADER		312-283-7761		IAN PUNNETT	punneti720@aol.com
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NEAR WEST GAZETTE		312-243-4270		PROGRAM DIR.	312-984-5295
NEWSWEEK		312-838-9106		JAY MARVIN	jmarv@is.netcom.com
NORTH SHORE JOURNAL		708-491-0421		ED CURRAN	edcurran@aol.com
NORTH SHORE MAGAZINE		708-441-8505		RUQH LIMBAUGH	70277.2502@compuserve.com
PEOPLE WEEKLY		312-321-7884	WLUP/W MVP		312-440-9377
PIONEER PRESS			WMAQ		312-245-8088
	BARRINGTON	708-361-5840	WMBI		312-329-4468
	EVANSTON	708-866-0965	WNUA		312-645-9652
	GLENVIEW	708-866-7451		CHAR. MEYERSON	WNUANews@aol.com
	OAK PARK	708-383-3678			
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WALL STREET JOURNAL		312-750-4153			
		312-750-4153			
WEST SIDE JOURNAL		708-339-8789			
WINDY CITY TIMES		312-635-1853			

INTERESTED IN HELPING??

*** ICARE IS INTERESTED IN WORKING AT THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY HOME FOOTBALL GAMES IN FOOD CONCESSIONS. WITH AS FEW AS 3 PEOPLE AND A TIME COMMITMENT FROM 10:30 AM TO 3:30 PM FOR 2 SATURDAYS, ICARE CAN POSSIBLY EARN AS MUCH AS \$400.00 AND HAVE FUN AT THE SAME TIME. FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ARE WELCOME TO JOIN IN. FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL ICARE AT 708/446-1615. YOUR HELP WILL BE APPRECIATED. ***

NEWS AND INFORMATION CONCERNING THE SOUNDEX REGISTRY

ICARE recently contacted ISRR for information about their Registry. We learned that Soundex receives 18,000 - 20,000 yearly inquiries. WOW! More adoptees contact ISRR than any other triad member, with birthmothers following at second and siblings finishing up at third. February is the most active month. The Soundex makes 500 - 600 matches annually. No state or country government has ever contacted the ISRR to ask for testimony. ISRR wants, "Open records NOW!" They concluded the questionnaire we sent by writing, "Let any person who desires confidentiality opt for it personally!" The Soundex is funded completely by donations. If you would like to help them with their work, please contact the International Soundex Reunion Registry, Post Office Box 2312, Carson City, Nevada 89702.

Did you know the ... ILLINOIS ADOPTION REGISTRY existed?

The Illinois Adoption Registry was established in 1985 and accepts registries from birthparents, adoptees (over the age of 21 years who were born in Illinois), and birth siblings of adopted persons. Adoptees between 18 and 21 years old may register with the written consent of both adoptive parents.

Upon completing the Registry Identification form and paying a filing fee of \$40.00, a applicant can complete either an Information Exchange Authorization or a Denial of Information Exchange form. Matches are only made if both birthparent and adult adoptee have authorized the release of identifying information to one another. No medical or social background information is released.

In the 10 years of its' existence, the Registry has facilitated only 17 reunions. We feel this is primarily due to the fact that there is no requirement nor budget (commitment on the part of the State of Illinois) to inform the public of the availability of such a registry. You can obtain registration forms by contacting the Illinois Department of Health in Springfield.

ISRR REGISTRATION FORM

MAIL THIS FORM DIRECTLY TO:

NO FEE CHARGED FOR REGISTRATION

★ ISRR REGISTRAR

POST OFFICE BOX 2312
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89702

CONFIDENTIAL

STATE OF _____
SECTION _____ ONE TWO _____
FILE NUMBER _____

SOUNDEX ENTRY _____

CODE LINE _____

★ Please do not write above this line ★

PRESENT NAME (Please Print) _____

ADDRESS _____
(street address) (town) (state) (zip code)

TELEPHONE NUMBER () SOCIAL SECURITY _____

REFERRED BY ISRR AFFILIATE (OR OTHER) _____

SEARCHER IS: ADOPTEE _____ ADOPTIVE PARENT _____ FOSTER CHILD _____
FOSTER PARENT _____ DIVORCED PARENT _____ CHILD OF DIVORCE _____
FOUNDLING _____ ORPHAN _____ OTHER _____
BIRTH PARENT _____ OTHER NEXT-OF-KIN BY BIRTH _____

★ Fill out this form as completely as possible in respect to the adoptee, or other child as facts were known when the separation occurred.

* PLEASE PRINT *

CHILD / ADOPTEE

NAME AT BIRTH _____ SEX - MALE _____ FEMALE _____
* DATE OF BIRTH - MONTH _____ DAY _____ YEAR _____ TIME _____ AM _____ PM _____
PLACE OF BIRTH (HOSPITAL OR OTHER) _____
CITY _____ COUNTY _____ STATE _____
NAME OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN, OR OTHER _____
BIRTH CERTIFICATE # _____ FILED _____ AMENDED _____
WAS THIS A SINGLE BIRTH? _____ PLURAL BIRTH? _____
IF A PLURAL BIRTH, SEPARATED FROM EACH OTHER BY ADOPTION? _____
MALE _____ FEMALE _____ NAME(S) _____

BIRTH MOTHER

MAIDEN NAME _____ NICKNAME _____
NAME USED BY MOTHER AT BIRTH OF THIS CHILD _____ AGE _____
NAME USED BY PARENT ON RELINQUISHMENT, OR CONSENT _____
DATE OF BIRTH _____ TOWN _____ STATE _____
MARITAL STATUS _____ RELIGION _____ OCCUPATION _____
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL _____ MILITARY SERVICE _____
MARRIED TO BIRTH FATHER? _____ HEIGHT _____ WEIGHT _____ HAIR _____ EYES _____
PARENTS _____

BIRTH FATHER

NAME _____ NICKNAME _____
DATE OF BIRTH _____ TOWN _____ STATE _____
AGE _____ MARITAL STATUS _____ RELIGION _____
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL _____ OCCUPATION _____
MILITARY SERVICE _____ HEIGHT _____ WEIGHT _____ HAIR _____ EYES _____
PARENTS _____

DOES THE ADOPTEE HAVE BROTHER OR SISTER BY BIRTH? _____ BY MOTHER _____ BY FATHER _____
NAMES _____

ADOPTEE - NAME BY ADOPTION _____ NICKNAME _____

ADOPTIVE MOTHER _____ ADOPTIVE FATHER _____

COURT OF JURISDICTION (BY NAME) _____ TOWN _____

COUNTY _____ STATE _____

CASE NUMBER, OR DECREE _____ FILED _____ FINAL _____

ATTORNEY OF RECORD _____ GUARDIAN-AD-LITEM _____

PLACING AGENCY _____ TOWN _____ STATE _____

SOCIAL WORKER _____ INTERMEDIARY _____

★ I, the undersigned hereby give my permission to the International Soundex Reunion Registry to release this vital information to the person(s) for whom this search is conducted. I understand this permission is necessary for verification of identity, and my relationship to the missing person.

★ SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

ALTERNATE ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE _____

"THIS IS YOUR REGISTRY - YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE"

ICARE
P. O. BOX 8393
NORTHFIELD, ILLINOIS 60093

ILLINOIS COUNCIL FOR ADOPTION REFORM
AND EDUCATION (ICARE)

ICARE SEEKS TO PROMOTE HONESTY, OPENNESS AND INTEGRITY IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATIVE REFORM. WE BELIEVE THAT ADOPTION LAW AND PRACTICE SHOULD BE CHILD CENTERED, RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, AND BE GROUNDED IN RESEARCH, CURRENT ADOPTION LITERATION AND THE EXPERIENCES OF THOSE WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY ADOPTION.

ILLINOIS
COUNCIL FOR
ADOPTION
REFORM AND
EDUCATION

P. O. Box 8303
NORTHFIELD, IL 60093
708/446-1615

ILLINOIS SEARCH AND SUPPORT ADOPTION GROUPS

ADOPTION SEARCH AND
SUPPORT GROUP
1701 RIVERVIEW DR.
MACOMB, ILLINOIS 61455
309/836-3809

TRUSTED SEEKERS IN ADOPTION
P. O. Box 366
PROSPECT HEIGHTS, IL 60070-0366
708/342-8742

ADOPTION TRIANGLE
BETH DUENING
Box 384
PARK FOREST, ILLINOIS 60460
219/365-2835

FAMILY ORIGINS
SANDY JOYCE
3567 GRAND AVE. #B121
GURNEE, IL 60031
708/355-1903

ADOPTION TRIANGLE
512 ONEIDA STREET
JOLIET, ILLINOIS 60435
815/722-4999

ADOPTERS LIBERTY MOVEMENT
ASSOC. (ALMA)
P. O. Box 23255
BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS 62223
618/538-5599

ALMA
P. O. Box 81
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS 61701
309/828-2217

ALMA
P. O. Box 59345
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60659
312/631-5816

ALMA
P. O. Box 1802
SKOKIE, ILLINOIS 60076
708/967-5378

AMERICAN ADOPTION CONGRESS
BONNIE BIS, STATE REPRESENTATIVE
835 RIDGE AVE., #208
EVANSTON, IL 60201
708/475-4095

MIDWEST ADOPTION CENTER
CONFIDENTIAL INTERMEDIARY
3166 S. RIVER ROAD
DES PLAINES, IL 60018
708/298-9097

CHICAGO BRANCH
CONCERNED UNITED BIRTHPARENTS
835 RIDGE, APT. 208
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60202
708/328-1686

HEALING HEARTS, INC.
P. O. Box 606
NORMAL, ILLINOIS 61761
309/692-3038

HERITAGE FINDERS
1102 ERIE STREET
ELGIN, ILLINOIS 60123
708/741-2189

MISSING PIECES
P. O. Box 7541
SPRINGFIELD, IL 62791-7541
217/787-8450

HERITAGE FINDERS
20955 S. CANTERBURY
SHOREWOOD, ILLINOIS 60436
815/725-8960

HIDDEN BIRTHRIGHT
100 CUMBERLAND
ROCHESTER, ILLINOIS 62563

LIFE PARTNERS, INC.
3 HAWTHORN PIKE #140
VERNON HILLS, ILLINOIS 60061
708/690-7525

REFLECTIONS
606 SHIPLEY STREET
CARME, ILLINOIS 62821
618/332-3142

SEARCH CONNECTION
MIKE EGAN - ISC*
P. O. Box 2425
BRIDGEVIEW, ILLINOIS 60455
708/430-9133

THE LOST CONNECTION
2210 N. ILLINOIS, SUITE 155
BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS 62221-2918
618/235-9409

*INDEPENDENT SEARCH CONSULTANT

ICARE MISSION STATEMENT

ICARE SEEKS TO PROMOTE HONESTY, OPENNESS AND INTEGRITY IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS THROUGH EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATIVE REFORM. WE BELIEVE THAT ADOPTION LAW AND PRACTICE SHOULD BE CHILD CENTERED, RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF ALL FAMILY MEMBERS, AND BE GROUNDED IN RESEARCH, CURRENT ADOPTION LITERATURE AND THE EXPERIENCES OF THOSE WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY ADOPTION.

10/95 ILGroup.

ption Crossroads, (HQ) 212-988-0110
E. 74th St., NY, NY 10021-3919
wister, Buffalo, Congers, Queens & Merrick, NY;
en & White Plains NY; Concord VT; Paris France
ption Forum, (HQ) 215-238-1116
S. 4th St, Suite 3465, Philadelphia, PA 19147
rimsburg, Lehigh Valley & New Hope, PA
ilmington, DE (Call Philadelphia Office)
nparent Support Network (HQ) 914-682-2250
Box 120, N. White Plains, NY 10603
B 34 Old Bethpage, NY 11804, 516-785-0886
9 Coney Is. Ave Bklyn NY 11218 718-284-0666
Main St, Queensbury, NY, 518-798-2133
olina Adoption Triangle Support, 919-732-2751
West Queen Street, Hillsborough, NC,
rington & Raleigh, NC (Call Hillsborough Office)
cerned United Birthparents
Mile Hill Rd, Boynton, MA 01505 508-869-6774
B 15258 Chevy Chase, MD 20825 301-292-3922
7 Dogwood Rd, Millersville, MD 21108 410-544-0083
1, Box 224A, Petersburg, NY 12138 518-658-2972
th Carolina Adoption Connections, 919-967-5010
Box 4153, Chapel Hill, NC 27515
hville: 704-254-8248, Raleigh: 919-876-8564
ungsville: 919-556-8355
nan Voyage (HQ) 303-856-3937
1 Road 2300, Cedaredge, CO 81413
34 Hwy 53, Toney, AL 35773-9507
Box 8245, Scottsdale, AZ 85252 602-990-1890
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11 Southminster, Houston, TX 77035 713-723-1762
eifting Birthparents, Inc. 205-923-4834
5 Avenue V, #32, Birmingham, AL 35208
ama Adoption Alliance, 205-246-3997
Box 1221, Jackson, AL 36545
rch Triad Inc., 602-977-1320
Box 10181, Phoenix, AZ 85064-0181
AD, 602-790-6320
5 E. Freestone Drive, Tucson, AZ 85730
it Adoptee Support Group, 602-885-6771
7 E Marquise Drive, Tucson, AZ 85715
ers, Ltd., 602-885-5958
1 E. 38th Street, Tucson, AZ 85731-1851
ption Suppt Gp of Santa Monica 310-829-1438
2 26th St., #103, Santa Monica, CA 90404
id in Hand Adoption Support
Teasdale St., Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
Fernando Vy Triad Srch/Supt 818-347-9690
Box 16656, North Hollywood, CA, 91615
nparent Connection, 619-753-8288
Box 230643, Encinitas, CA, 92023
ption Connection of San Diego, 619-753-8288
Box 230643, Encinitas, CA, 92023
ptees/Birthparents' Association, 805-482-8667
Box 33, Camarillo, CA, 93011
ption With Truth, 415-704-9349
Panoramic Way, Berkeley, CA 94704
ER of Marin, 415-924-7047
Redwood Ave., Corte Madera, CA 94925
rch Finders of California, 408-356-6711
Box 24595, San Jose, CA 95154
essional Adoption Search Team, 408-978-5430
Box 24095, San Jose, CA 95154-4095
ido Lake Adoption Triad, 707-468-0648
Walnut Avenue, Ukiah, CA 95482
County Adoption Search Assoc 916-784-2711
Box 1461, Roseville, CA 95661
RI 916-241-6926
1 Eastside Road, Redding, CA 96001
ption Answers-Support-Kinship 203-633-3130
omestead Dr. S. Glastonbury, CT 06073
ption Healing, 203-846-3281, 866-6475
Hadik Parkway, So Norwalk, CT 06854
s That Blind, 203-874-2023
Box 3119, Milford, CT 06460
ptees In Search, 303-232-6302
24556, Denver, CO 80224
ptees & Birthparents Together, 303-226-2956
Garfield, Fort Collins, CO 80524
ers Keepers, (HQ) 302-834-8888
Box 748, Bear, DE 19701-0748 & Rehoboth, DE
Florida Adoption Reunions 904-237-1955
Box 3475, Bellevue, FL 32620
anized Adoption Srch Info Svce 305-757-0942
Box 53-0761, Miami Shores, FL 33153
ptee Birthfamily Connection, 407-768-2222
Box 100444, Palm Bay, FL 32910-0444
ption Family & Reunion Center, 813-542-1342
Box 1860, Cape Coral, FL 33910
RM Network, 813-542-1342
Box 6581, Ft Myers, FL 33911

Adoptees Search & Referral Source, 813-942-1462
PO Box 3412, Holiday, FL 34690-3412
Nat'l Org/Birthfather/Adopt Reform 813-575-0948
1139 Bal Harbor Blvd, Punta Gorda, FL 33950
Mother & Child Reunion, 407-878-9101
2219 SW MI Vernon St, Port St Lucie, FL 34963
Orlando TRIAD, 407-877-8711
2359 Summerfield Rd, Winter Garden, FL 32792
Adoptee Birthparent Connection, 404-642-9063
4565 Pond Lane, Marietta, GA 30062
Adoption Beginnings, 404-590-9836
PO Box 440121, Kennesaw, GA 30144
Adoption Circle of Hawaii, 808-625-1841
PO Box 61723, Honolulu, HI 96839
Committee/Adoption Reform/Educ., 808-373-9747
55 Niukiki Circle, Honolulu, HI 96821
Family Search Services, 515-255-0356
PO Box 30106, Des Moines, IA 50310
Adoption Support Group, 208-726-8543
PO Box 2316, Ketchum, ID 83340
Search Finders of Idaho, 208-375-9803
PO Box 7941, Boise, ID 83707
IL Coalition for Adoption Reform, 708-441-7581
244 Latrobe Avenue, Northfield, IL 60093
The Lost Connection, 618-235-9409
2210 N Illinois St, #155, Bellville, IL 62221
Missing Pieces, 217-787-8450
PO Box 7541, Springfield, IL 62791-7541
Adoption Triangle, 219-365-0574
PO Box 384, Park Forest, IL 60466
Adoptees Identity Doorway, 219-272-3520
PO Box 361, South Bend, IN 46624
A.B.S.E.N.T., 317-436-7257
711 W Plum Street, Thornton, IN 46071-1249
Search for Tomorrow, 219-749-4392
PO Box 441, New Haven, IN 46774
Indiana Adoption Coalition, 317-453-4427
PO Box 1292, Kokomo, IN 46901
Support of Search, 317-453-4427
PO Box 1292, Kokomo, IN 46901
Coping With Adoption 317-472-7425
61 County Farm Road, Peru, IN 46970
Lafayette Adoption Srch/Supt Org., 317-567-4139
5936 Lookout Drive, W. Lafayette, IN 47906
Adoption Concerns Triangle, 913-357-1581
1427 N. Harrison, Topeka, KS 66608
Wichita Adult Adoptees, 316-522-8772
4551 S. Osage, Wichita, KS 67217-4743
Adoptee Awareness, 502-245-2811
PO Box 23019, Anchorage, KY 40223
Birthmothers Sharing, 502-491-0172, 271-5926
PO Box 73184, Bellevue, KY 41073-0184
Adoptees' Birthrights Committee, 504-835-4284
PO Box 9442, Metairie, LA 70005
Adoption Connection of LA, 504-454-7728
7301 W Judge Perez, Suite 311, Arabi, LA 70032
Adoption Triad Network, Inc. 318-984-3682
PO Box 3932, Lafayette, LA 70502
TRY-Resource/Referral Center 413-584-6599
PO Box 989 Northampton, MA 01061-0989
C.A.R.E.S., 508-772-2699
20 Blanchard St., Harvard, MA 01451
Adoption Triad Seeking Support, 508-949-1919
10 W Hollow Ln, Webster, MA 01570
Adoption Connection, 508-532-1261
11 Peabody Square, #6, Peabody, MA 01960
Family Connections, 617-498-9660
1770 Mass Ave, #211, Cambridge, MA 02140
Cape Cod Adoption Connection 508-896-7332
PO Box 336, Brewster, MA 02631
Adoptees In Search, 301-656-8555
PO Box 41016, Bethesda, MD 20824
Lost or Found, 410-820-5138
7290 Shirley Drive, Easton, MD 21601
Adoption Search Consultants of ME, 207-773-3378
PO Box 2793, So. Portland, ME 04116
Adoption Sup. Gp of Penobscot Bay 207-372-6322
Taylor's Point, Tenant's Harbor, ME 04860
Adoption Identity Movement, 313-548-6291
PO Box 812, Hazel Park, MI 48030-0812
Truth in the Adoption Triad, 313-686-3988
8107 Webster Road, Mt Morris, MI 48454
Adoption Identity Movement
PO Box 72, Orionville, MI 48462
Bonding By Blood, Unlimited, 517-823-8248
4710 Cottrell Road, Vassar, MI 48768
Kalamazoo Birthparent Support Gp, 616-324-0634
PO Box 2183, Portage, MI 49081-2183
Adoption Insight, 616-327-1999
PO Box 171, Portage, MI 49081
Retrace Roots, 816-843-8409
PO Box 982, Ludington, MI 49431
Adoption Identity Movement, 616-531-1380
PO Box 9265, Grand Rapids, MI 49509

Roots and Reunions, 906-635-5922
210 Barbeau St Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783-2402
Post Adoption Support Services, 906-428-4861
1221 Minnesota Ave., Gladstone, MI 49837
Minnesota Reunion Registry, 612-433-5211
23247 Lofton Court No. Scandia, MN 55073-9752
Liberal Ed. for Adoptive Families, 612-436-2218
23247 Lofton Court No. Scandia, MN 55073-9752
Adoptee Searches, Inc. 800-434-0020
PO Box 803, Chesterfield, MO 63006-0803
Birthparent Connection
121 Weiss Avenue, St Louis, MO 63125
Sup Open Adopt Recs Srch/Sup Gp, 314-828-5726
4589 Hopewell Road, Wentzville, MO 63385
Kansas City Adult Adoptees, 816-356-5213
PO Box 11828, Kansas City, MO 64138-9998
Connecting Adoptees, 816-333-5656
PO Box 30252, Kansas City, MO 64112
Adoption Information Network, 601-482-7556
PO Box 4154, Meridian, MS 39304
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Issues Facing Adult Adoptees

Inside

■ *Identity and Self-Esteem*

■ *Feelings of Abandonment*

■ *The Interest in Genetic Information*

How Adopted Persons Cope

Often when people hear the word "adoption," they think of an infertile, childless couple delightedly gazing into the eyes of their recently adopted newborn baby. They are thrilled to finally be parents, and are totally involved in meeting the immediate needs of the child. But what about the years that follow? Do the effects of adoption stop the moment that a child comes home to the new parents?

Those closely associated with adoption—adult adopted persons, birth parents, adoptive parents, and their friends and families—know that its effects can be felt for a long time, in fact for a lifetime. Adult adoptees¹ often talk about them. For example, Steve Harris, a 39-year-old program director at a Dallas radio station who was adopted as an infant, has been plagued with low self-esteem throughout his life. Marie Haverton, a 24-year-old office manager who was adopted at birth, has always been afraid that people are going to leave her, whether it is the men she dates or the people with

whom she works. Mary Lou Roman did not know she had been adopted until she was 17 and about to be married. Her parents could not produce her birth certificate, but instead handed her the legal document stating that she had been adopted. Suddenly she knew why she had so many identity problems in her early teenage years.

Most people at some time in their lives have feared rejection or have felt badly about themselves for one reason or another. But adopted persons have a unique issue that distinguishes them from their peers—they were not raised by their biological parents. Some adoptees spend a lot of time wondering why their birth parents placed them for adoption, and what their life would have been like if they had not been adopted. They wonder if something was wrong with them from the start that caused them to be placed with other parents.

Some adopted persons link all of their problems to the fact that they were adopted. Others do not make that connection or insist that having been adopted has not interfered with their ability to live a happy, fulfilling life. Others feel very positive about their adoption experience, but realize that adoption brings with it certain issues. Just about everyone who has been adopted consciously or unconsciously faces issues of identity and feelings of loss, especially at milestone events—such as graduation from high school or college, marriage, the birth of a child, or the death of an adoptive parent. Adopted persons may wonder how their birth parents would feel if they knew their child had reached these milestones.

Some adopted persons are able to work through their feelings on their own or with the support of friends and family; others seek professional help to deal with the range of emotions they feel about having been adopted.

"Adoptees suffer from a fear of loss. They see loss all over the place," says Dr. Marshall Schechter, a psychiatrist at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine and a nationally recognized expert on adoption. "Even those adopted in infancy feel the loss," he says. "If it happened once, it can happen again."

Many adopted adults who have been in therapy with Dr. Schechter have come to him with

complaints of depression, alcohol or drug use, marital problems, or problems with their children. Frequently they are having difficulty maintaining intimate relationships. While Dr. Schechter warns against making generalizations about all adoptees—some feel remarkably free of conflict—he and other therapists find that many wrestle with the concerns that Steve, Marie, and Mary Lou identify, including questions about identity and self-esteem, feelings of abandonment, and an interest in obtaining information about their genetic background. This factsheet discusses each of these issues and presents some methods for coping.

Identity and Self-Esteem

Establishing one's identity is the major task of adolescence. Teenagers, whether adopted or not, must deal with such questions as, "Who am I?" "Where do I fit?" "What do I want to do with my life?" For those who were adopted, the search for personal identity is complicated every step of the way by the mystery of their genetic background. They wonder who gave them their particular characteristics, and they want answers to questions their adopted parents may not be able to provide: "Where do I get my artistic talent?" "Was everyone in my birth family short?" "What is my ethnic background?" "Why was I placed for adoption?" Twenty-four-year-old Jamie, adopted at age 3, says, "I feel like a cereal

box with no ingredients. Even my furniture has a tag that says what it is made of. And written on the tag is 'do not remove.'"

Often the undeniable fact that an adoptee does not resemble other family members stimulates intense feelings of aloneness. Steve Harris, for example, did not look anything like his family. "I would go to family reunions and everyone was tall and thin and I was short and stocky. They had dark complexions and I was much lighter. They were good at sports and I wasn't. I would spend a week with people who were supposed to be family, but we didn't have anything in common. I looked different. My personality and temperament were different. I would come home feeling like I didn't belong."

In most families, even when a child does not look like his or her parents, there is usually someone else to point to—Aunt Sarah, Grandpa Harry—to make the comparison. Adopted children may feel particularly or overly sensitive about the fact that they do not resemble other family members and believe "that their parents have settled for second best," says Dr. Schechter. "No amount of reassuring can diminish what adopted persons perceive as a stunning difference (between themselves and other family members). They may develop fantasies, both positive and negative, about their birth family, and it often hampers their ability to move on with their lives."

Feelings of Abandonment

Adoptive parents discuss adoption with their children in different ways. Some parents can talk easily about the subject and encourage their children to ask questions and share their feelings. Others, often because of their own insecurities about their right to be parents, say little about adoption, or even say negative things about a child's birth parents. In these situations, children may feel that there must be something shameful about their past and, thus, begin to feel shameful about themselves. As adults, these individuals may feel they do not have permission to grieve the loss they feel from not growing up with their biological families. According to Lois Melina, co-author of *The Open Adoption Experience*, they may become "stuck" in their anger and sadness.

However, even when adoptive parents say all the right things, such as "your birthmother was not able to care for you and she wanted you to have the best home possible," some children who have been adopted have strong feelings of abandonment. They think that since their mothers abandoned them, others in their lives will also abandon them. As a result, as adults they do not expect much from other relationships. They fear rejection, have trouble making commitments, and avoid intimacy. Intimate relationships, in fact, can be quite difficult for some men and women who have been adopted. Fears about

abandonment and low self-esteem often lead them to sabotage their relationships. They may perceive this as the only way to insulate themselves from being abandoned again.

According to Dr. Schechter, some adoptees feel that "being vulnerable is just too risky. They fear that a person they invest in will leave them just like their birth parents did. It causes them to be wary of how close they can get to people." For some adoptees, the scenario may be similar to that of Catherine, who at 31 had been unable to maintain an intimate relationship for longer than 2 months. She would fall passionately in love, become intensely involved, then suddenly feel dissatisfied and break off the relationship. It happened as soon as her partner suggested a more permanent emotional commitment. "I would panic," Catherine says. "I always wanted to leave them before they left me. That way I could be the one in control and not get hurt."

Some adoptees avoid intimacy because they are uncomfortable with the openness and vulnerability that such relationships entail. "Many times, entering into an intimate relationship will force someone to admit secrets he has kept hidden even from himself," say the authors of *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self*. "For an adoptee in a new, intimate relationship, this can mean expressing feelings about being

adopted that have previously been dormant or suppressed."²

Other adoptees may thwart their intimate relationships by being too clingy. For example, Steve Harris admits, "As a child, I was always hanging on to my mother. Whenever she would leave the room, I would cry. Later, I transferred the same behavior to the women in my life. I was always afraid they would leave me, so I pressured them so that they had no choice but to back off. I didn't even realize I was doing it."

This is not to say that all adoptees have problems with feelings of abandonment in their intimate relationships. However, many come to understand that they have an additional sensitivity to the issue.

The Interest in Genetic Information

Another issue facing adoptees is that they often lack family medical history and other family information. A visit to the doctor's office, where one is likely to be asked about one's family medical history, makes adoptees acutely aware of how they differ from those who were not adopted. Thirty-two-year-old Rena says, "I used to be uncomfortable in the doctor's office when he would ask me for my medical history. 'Did anyone in your family have diabetes? Cancer? Heart disease?' Actually, I never focused on my adoption until I had to confront the fact that I had this whole

genetic inheritance I knew nothing about. Every time I read in the newspaper about a new disease, I wondered, perhaps, if I had the genes for that one. It made me very uneasy."

When an adoptee plans to get married or become a parent, his or her need for genetic information may become more intense. People have different questions about the child they will produce, such as what the child will look like, and if the child will inherit any genetic disorders, such as sickle-cell anemia. Unfortunately, the fear of the unknown has kept some adoptees from having their own children. "I was afraid to start a family," says 36-year-old Beatrice. "It is my deepest regret in life." Other adopted persons who have not had a reunion say that the birth of a baby provides the first opportunity to encounter a "blood relative," and it is a joyously anticipated event. Meryl—who was 38 before she felt comfortable enough to become pregnant—says, "I couldn't wait for my son or daughter to be born. I wanted to see someone, to hold someone who was connected to me through blood lines. This child I was carrying became the most important thing in my life—my only connection to the past or the future."

Most people take for granted the fact that they have access to their genetic and medical information. For those who were adopted, however, it is very difficult to obtain updated medical

information unless birth parents have updated their file. Many States allow adopted persons to have access to their non-identifying information. Some have mutual consent registries that provide identifying information to the parties in an adoption only if all have agreed that they wish to be found. Alabama, Alaska, Kansas, and Hawaii are the only States with an open record policy. Some adoptees are quite angry at the obstacles placed before them in trying to recover what they consider their birthright—full access to their adoption records, including identifying information. "It is outrageous that society should decide that I have no right to my records," says Florence Fisher, founder of the Adoptees Liberty Movement Association (ALMA). "Why should I pay taxes to a country that won't give me my birth certificate?"

"I was told I would need my adoptive parents' permission before anything could be released to me," says 45-year-old Bonnie, who was similarly outraged at being unable to obtain her birth certificate. "I have two adult children of my own and they are telling me that I need my 68-year-old mother's permission to find out my history." Adoptions arranged 45 years ago never included a provision for ongoing contact between adoptive and birth parents. Over the past 10-15 years there have been a number of changes in adoption practice. Nowadays, even if there is not full openness in an

adoption there is often a mechanism for willing parties to communicate with one another through the agency or attorney who arranged the adoption so that updated medical and other non-identifying information can be shared.

How Adopted Persons Cope

"Being adopted," says Marie Haverton, "is a lifelong issue. Even if it doesn't haunt you, even if you have a job and a family and a good self-image, the fact that the family that you grew up in is not the family whose genetics you share never goes away. Some of us live in denial. Others of us make an uneasy peace with our situations. Some seek kinship in support groups. Some, like me, have to find our birth families."

Support Groups

National organizations such as ALMA or the American Adoption Congress, or local support groups such as Philadelphia's Adoption Forum, offer solace, sympathy, and an opportunity for those who have been adopted to exchange feelings and information. For many, it is one of the few places where everyone understands the unique aspects of adoption and feelings can be expressed openly. It is an environment in which adoptees can tell their stories and hear about other people's experiences. "People in your life try to be sympathetic," says Barbara Bucharis, "but there is

no way you can understand what it feels like not to know where you came from. No matter how many books you read on the subject or how much research you've done, you can never understand—unless you've lived it—what it feels like to have this mystery in your life.”

“Support groups help validate your feelings,” confirms Marie Haverton. “You see that what you are feeling isn't crazy. There are a lot of people in the same boat and they are there to help you along.” Hearing in support group meetings how others have coped with their feelings of abandonment, rejection, and loss can inspire troubled adult adoptees to work through their own issues. They might decide to talk to a counselor about these issues, possibly going to one that someone in the support group found helpful, or they might decide to search for their birth family.

Counseling

Some adult adoptees find individual counseling with a counselor who is knowledgeable about adoption issues to be very helpful. An experienced therapist can help adult adoptees untangle which of their concerns are adoption-related and which are adjustment issues that many people in their stage of life go through. According to Detroit-area adoption therapist Linda Yellin, MSW, who is herself an adoptee, “Therapy can assist adoptees in a number of different ways. It can help them with

their interpersonal relationships; the integration of their adoption experiences; their struggles around adoption issues; and with their healing process. Therapy can also assist adoptees in sorting through the decision about whether or not to search for birth relatives. If a search is undertaken, the counselor can assist in preparing an adoptee for a possible reunion, and in understanding and integrating the new information and newly found family of origin as well as the upheaval of emotions that often accompanies a search and its aftermath.”

For instance, some adoptees' reunions go very well. They find their birth family, and they like them very much, and everyone is happy to have been found. For those adoptees, the issues in therapy may be the grief and loss they feel at not having been able to grow up with that family. For those who were adopted at an older age from the foster care system, therapy may help them deal with the consequences of the abuse or neglect they endured when they were younger. Even if they are happy with their place in their adoptive family, they may still be dealing with the effects of their early life experiences. Therapy is a resource that adoptees, adoptive parents, and birth parents can use to help them handle whatever emotions they are feeling.

Occasionally, therapists who are knowledgeable about adoption issues offer therapy groups in

which all of the participants are adopted adults, or are touched by adoption in some way. Participants could be adoptive parents, birth parents, or perhaps a sibling of an adoptee. These groups go into more depth than the type of support group described above. They actually combine the best elements of a support group and individual counseling: members of the group all have the adoption experience in common, and the group is facilitated by a skilled mental health professional.

The Search for Birth Parents

In the past, it was assumed that a healthy, well-adjusted adopted person would have no desire to delve into his or her birth history. Those who insisted that they needed this information and access to their birth records were considered to be ungrateful at the least, and seriously disturbed at the worst. It was startling, therefore, when the May 1971 issue of the *Pediatrics* journal printed the following: “There is ample evidence that the adopted child retains the need for seeking his ancestry for a long time.”³ Later in the 1970's, a research group in California led by Arthur D. Sorosky, M.D., a clinical professor of child psychiatry at UCLA, and social workers Annette Baran and Reuben Pannor revealed that by late adolescence and young adulthood, just about all adoptees in their study felt a sense of “genealogical bewilderment,” defined as “psychological confusion about

their genetic origins." The researchers found that adoptees search for their birth family because of both a sociological and a biological need.

Indeed, recent research indicates that it is normal and healthy for adopted persons to want to know more about their genetic background. "There is a significant difference in the way adoptees perceive themselves when they have some information about their birth family's background," says Marcie Griffin, an adoption counselor at Hope Cottage Adoption Center in Dallas, Texas. "When adoptees learn something about their birthmother's education or special talents or are given some explanation of why they were placed, they begin to have greater self-esteem and a better idea of who they really are."

Nonetheless, adoptees thinking about searching hear many voices. One voice tells them not to open Pandora's box—they may be devastated by what they find. Perhaps they will experience rejection or find a birth parent who needs emotional or financial support they are not prepared to give. What about the rights of the birthmother who may have carved out a life for herself and does not want the intrusion? Adoptees must also consider their adoptive parents and the grief that a search may bring them. Adoptive parents may feel unloved, unappreciated, and hurt

by their child's need to find his or her "real" parents.

Experienced adoption therapists say that while adoptees may want to take other people's real or imagined feelings into consideration, their own feelings are also important. In most cases, they did not have any control over whether they were placed for adoption, or with whom. Searching is a way for them to get back some of that control, fill in missing pieces, and move on. If adoptees have a strong urge to seek out the people to whom they are biologically related, most therapists say they should follow it. In addition, adoptees planning to search for their birth parents and hoping to have a reunion should have a support network in place while going through the process. The support network can be the adoptee's spouse and children, adoptive family, good friends, therapist, support group, or a combination of several of these.

"One of the misconceptions that adoptive parents have," explains Dr. Schechter, "is that they have done something to make their child want to search. They haven't. Everyone needs to feel that they are part of a continuum of a family. It represents a normal need in people to know, for instance, why they are artistic but their family isn't, why they are gregarious and their parents are quiet. As more is learned about genetics, scientists are discovering that many talents

and personality traits have a genetic basis." Steve Harris talks to prospective adoptive parents and tries to prepare them for the questions and concerns that their children may face as they grow up. He reassures them that their children's curiosity about their identity has nothing to do with poor parenting. "Just because your son or daughter wants to find a birth parent doesn't mean you did something wrong. It is just information we need to feel like a whole person for the first time in our lives," Harris says.

In fact, a successful search, with the support of adoptive parents, often makes relationships between parents and adopted persons closer. That was the experience of Mary Lou Roman. "I think, in the beginning, my parents worried that I would find my birthmother and love her more than I loved them," says Mary Lou, who searched for 14 years before finding her father and brother. "I explained to my parents that I had been happy in my adoptive home, but I had to know who my birth parents were. I felt like a lost person, that I belonged to no one, that I had nothing to contribute. I told them how I looked in the mirror and started to cry, yearning for someone, somewhere, who looked like me, maybe walked like me. They understood, supported my search, and I found that we got closer and spent more time together once I felt like a complete human being. My parents live with me now, and I love them more than ever before."

Dr. Sorosky and his research team found that almost all adoptees in their study wanted to know about their genetic past. Perhaps some did not focus on their adoption and were able to resolve issues surrounding it on their own, or had enough information about the circumstances of their adoption to satisfy them. Adoptees who are basically curious and questioning may decide to undertake an active search. In either case, their decision is not necessarily related to the quality of the relationship between them and their adoptive parents.

For those who do search, the goal should be the truth. They must be willing to accept whatever they find. "I pictured my mother being everything from Madame Curie to a 42nd Street hooker," says Mary Lou Roman. "It didn't matter what I found. I just wanted to know the truth." Even for those adoptees who have searched for birth parents only to experience rejection again, the result is still viewed positively. Many believe that searching helped them to finally achieve adulthood, lay aside childhood fantasies, and accept themselves as a whole person.⁴ Marie Haverton agrees, "Searching for my birthmother wasn't something I wanted to do. It was something I *had* to do. Even though things didn't always go smoothly for everyone involved, I would definitely do it again. I got the answers to my questions."

For many, searching can be an important step toward resolving questions of origin. However, even meeting one's birth family will not magically restore self-esteem or erase the sense of rejection that adoptees may have felt through the years. Post-reunion issues themselves take a lot of work; for instance, deciding how involved to be with birth family members after finding them and how to combine those relationships with adoptive family relationships. Gaining the birth family as an adult cannot make up for the years that were not spent together on a day-to-day basis. But it certainly can bring an added dimension to one's life.

Steve Harris remembers, "The night I spoke with my birthmother for the first time—we spent about 3 hours talking on the telephone about our likes and dislikes—closure was brought to a part of my life. I can remember waking up the next day feeling great. It was the most peaceful night's sleep I had ever had."

Conclusion

Adoption brings with it certain core issues. As adopted children grow into adulthood, they carry their thoughts and feelings about being adopted with them. Adult adoptees may have no, some, or great difficulty dealing with these thoughts and feelings. Some will struggle with the added dynamic that adoption brings to their life, and for others there will be little or no struggle.

We hope this factsheet has been helpful in at least pointing out to adult adoptees that they are not alone, whatever their feelings about being adopted. There are many helpful resources available to them, among them the National Adoption Information Clearinghouse (NAIC).

The NAIC can help adult adoptees in three ways. First, the NAIC publishes a related factsheet called "Searching for Birth Relatives." In addition to discussing the issues, the factsheet also provides a State-by-State list of all the known national and local adult adoptee search and support groups in the United States. Second, the NAIC provides referrals to a growing list of adoption experts, some of whom are psychotherapists (counselors) who specialize in working with adult adoptees and others who are touched by adoption. Third, the NAIC can supply bibliographic information on many other books and articles on relevant topics. For any of these resources, contact NAIC at 11426 Rockville Pike, Ste. 410, Rockville, MD 20852, (301) 231-6512.

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Notes

1. Some names used in this
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protect privacy.

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WHAT IS CUB?

CUB (Concerned United Birthparents, Inc.) is a non profit organization that began its official existence in October 1976 to provide mutual support for birthparents, men and women who have surrendered children to adoption. CUB membership and purposes have expanded since those early days.

CUB members now include birthparents, adoptees, adoptive parents, other adoption affected people and professionals. CUB's purposes are providing mutual support for coping with the ongoing pains and problems of adoption, working for adoption reforms in law and social policy, preventing unnecessary family separations, assisting adoption separated relatives in searching for family members and educating the public about adoption issues and realities.

MUTUAL SUPPORT

People sometimes mistakenly assume the surrender of a child ends a traumatic time for birthparents and is soon forgotten. Robin Winkler, in his study of birthmothers, reports that even forty years later birthparents regard the loss of a child to adoption as the most stressful part of their lives. He found that for half of birthparents the pain of that loss remains as intense as at surrender or intensifies over time. The loss of a child to adoption can affect all areas of life, particularly marriage, subsequent children and difficulty trusting other people.

Adoptive parents frequently lack the information they need to assist their children with developing healthy self identity and obtaining needed medical services. In increasing numbers, adoptive parents have joined CUB in efforts to understand the issues confronting their children. They recognize that adoption is a blended family situation in which they are the nurturing parents, but their children also have birthparents. They believe that sealing their children's original

birth certificates implies adoption is inadequate and must be disguised as birth. They resent this lack of respect for the authenticity of adoptive parenting. They want the right to know the other parents who love their child.

Growing up in an adoptive home is different than growing up in a family in which parents and children are genetically related. Adoptees share their love and lives with adoptive parents, but not their genes and histories. Adoptees' bodies, talents, health and genes come from their birthparents, who remain important to adoptees even though adoptive parents clearly become the primary parents. Adoptees' need to know their origins and birthfamilies does not indicate a lack of love for adoptive parents, but shows the adoptees are secure enough in their adoptive parents' love to pursue their need to know their own backgrounds.

Mutual support through monthly meetings, a monthly newsletter, correspondence and phone calls helps members cope with adoption difficulties and feelings.

ADOPTION REFORM

Many CUB members work to promote legislative and social policy changes to require fully informing vulnerable families, including single parent families, of all alternatives and services available to them and to assist them to keep their families together. There are some parents whose situation, even with support, does not permit them to raise their children. When adoption is truly necessary, we encourage changes that would make adoption a humane and caring alternative, not a punishment. Closed adoption harms all parties by denying choices and by imposing secrecy on people who do not want it. We encourage openness, honesty and cooperation in adoption.

Birthparents surrender because of a temporary lack of resources, not a lack of

love. Parents unable to raise their children should have a voice in who will raise them, just as parents who die have such a voice through their wills. Denying loving parents any options, choices or knowledge of their children, even when their children are adults, is a cruel and unnecessary punishment that causes suffering for birthparents and their families as well as discouraging future adoptions. Birthparents' love for their children does not end with their surrender.

Many agencies arrange open adoptions because it benefits adoptees and adoptive parents to be able to answer medical questions doctors ask with the assurance that up to date answers are available. Adoptive parents can reassure their children that their birthparents were and are loving people. Many adoptive parents feel that knowing the birthparents as people gives them freedom from unwarranted fears about the birthparents and allows them to help their children grow into whole people whose backgrounds are accepted facts, not frightening fantasies.

By denying adoptees knowledge of their origins and birthfamilies, our society treats responsible adults as eternal children. Like other citizens, every adoptee has a distinct genetic background and history. Yet unlike other citizens, adoptees in many states are never considered old enough to have a right to know their backgrounds. If adoption is to serve the needs of all parties, it must be changed to address people's needs at the time of surrender and placement and throughout their lives. This means social and legal recognition of the facts that adoptees grow up, that the needs of the parties change over the years, and that living with truth is healthier for all parties than living with fears and fantasies.

PREVENTION

Many CUB members live with the pain

of being separated from family members and living in incomplete families. The circumstances leading to the surrender of a child are most often temporary and can be overcome with caring support for a time. A temporary lack of finances or support should not require a loving parent and child to be separated. To prevent unnecessary separations, some of our members have welcomed young mothers and their children into their homes. They have been moved to see these mothers and children beaming at each other with love, and often have proudly attended the mothers' weddings and graduations. By providing temporary support, we have been able to help vulnerable young families overcome their temporary difficulties so they could be strong, healthy, positive families. Often members assist by sharing their own situations and feelings with young parents-to-be and their families. CUB has produced a booklet concerning the choices available to people experiencing an unplanned pregnancy because of our concern that parents be informed of alternatives and choices.

SEARCH

CUB members give each other one to one assistance on searching. CUB branches hold search workshops for members who have attended three support meetings. New members can place free ads in our monthly newsletter to request search help. We let members know of other search groups in their area. We also have a reunion registry in which members can place their names in the hope their child, parent or sibling will also register so they can be matched. Perhaps our most important service to searchers is to provide emotional support during search and the opportunity to learn of and consider possibilities that may await them. We help searchers be sensitive to others' needs as they plan for contact and reunion. Members who are not close to a

branch receive support and information through monthly newsletters, correspondence and phone calls with members.

EDUCATION

CUB has a strong interest in educating not only adoption affected individuals but also society in general about adoption issues. Many of our members and leaders volunteer their time to speak to community groups about issues relating to family separation and adoption. In addition, CUB distributes and produces literature concerning adoption.

WHERE CAN I WRITE?

If you are interested in joining or would like additional information about CUB or literature topics available, please write to CUB's national headquarters:

Concerened United Birthparents, Inc.
2000 Walker Street
Des Moines, IA 50317
800-822-2777



CUB CHICAGO BRANCH
c/o Bonnie Bis
835 Ridge Ave. #208
Evanston, IL 60202
(708) 328-1686

Separated By Adoption?

WHAT IS CUB?

