

Adoption Plans and Open Adoption

The Misconceptions, Truths and Benefits of Open Adoption



Infant of Prague
Central California Adoption Services

What Is An Adoption Plan?

When a birth parent decides to make a plan of adoption, it's just that, a thoughtful, heartfelt plan. The decision to make a plan is never taken lightly and should only be made after expectant parents have looked at all of their options. We never use the words "give up" or "give away" because we know that's simply not what happens – the expectant parents have chosen a path for their child's upbringing.

What Is Open Adoption?

Over the past 30 years, the practice of open adoption has become the norm. This trend emerged to correct the problems created by traditional closed adoption. The roots of traditional closed adoption can be traced to the nineteenth century and involve the issues of unwed mothers, illegitimate children and how society should deal with them. Given the shame associated with adoption in those days, it is no wonder that secrecy became the overriding goal. The change from closed, secret adoption, to open adoption, has proven to be beneficial for all concerned.

That being said, if a birth mother elects to have a closed adoption or to provide only non-identifying information to the adoptive family, Infant of Prague will respect her decision.

How Does Open Adoption Work?

The birthmother, after receiving counseling and help to prepare for the adoption of her child, chooses the adoptive family. In most cases, she meets with the family, usually in our office, becomes acquainted with them, and adapts to a level of comfort that allows her to release her baby to the adoptive family.

The birthmother and the adoptive family mutually agree on the level of openness and the format of communication that they will maintain. Contact can range from exchanging non-identifying information to exchanges of pictures and updated information. It can sometimes mean ongoing visitation if that is desired. An Infant of Prague social worker is there every step of the way to mediate the level of communication that is comfortable to all.

The most important element of open adoption is the mutual trust that develops between the adoptive family and the birthmother. In addition, the birthmother's decision to commit to adoption is strengthened and supported when she knows her child will grow up in a loving home that she has selected. The greatest beneficiary is the adopted child who knows they are loved and cherished by everyone involved in his or her adoption.

Common Misconceptions

Given the history of closed adoption, there are many misconceptions about open adoption. Research has shown open adoption is best for all involved, but some myths still exist.

The Birth Parents Might Change Their Minds and Take the Child Back

In voluntary adoption, the adoption decision is just that, voluntary. The birth parents decide to make a plan of adoption because they feel they are not ready, able or equipped to parent. No matter how much they may miss their child, they made the decision on their own and know they made it in the best interest of their child.

Open Adoption is Co-Parenting

Think of the relationship between someone and their in-laws. Everyone involved loves one person and so they build relationships out of love and respect for that person. Open adoption is similar. The birth family and the adoptive family come together to support and love the child. That being said, the adoptive parents are and will always be mom and dad. They are responsible for raising the child as if the adopted child was their biological child.

The Child Will Be Confused

Families come in all shapes and sizes. Today many families are shaped by divorce, second marriages, step-brothers and sisters, half brothers and sister, etc. In an open adoption, birth parents can be like extended family members, but they do not take the place of parents.

The Benefits of Open Adoption: For the Birth Parents

Birth parents love their baby and they make a plan out of that love. Open adoption benefits the birth parents as well as the child.

Birth Parents Can Select the Adoptive Family

Once a birth mother has chosen to make a plan, she is given the option to choose the adoptive family. At Infant of Prague, each of our families creates an album that shares pictures and information about them. The birth mother can select a family from an album and if she would like, meet with the family. Our social workers help facilitate the process to ensure everyone feels that they right match has been made.

Birth Families Can Have a Relationship with the Adoptive Family (If They Choose To)

By having an open adoption, birth families can maintain the amount of contact they choose with the adoptive family. The contact can range from exchanging non-identifying information to exchanges of pictures and letters, phone calls or visits.

It is also important to remember that a birth family can be involved. Sometimes birth grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins are included in the plans for openness. Once again, this is just an example of more people coming together to love and support the child.

We know that making a plan is not an easy decision and will come with emotional ups and downs, therefore we offer free, lifelong counseling and support to our birth parents. We believe in walking beside our birth parents before, during and after making a plan.

The Benefits of Open Adoption: For the Child

Adoption can create a divide for a child between their biology and biography. By practicing open adoption, the child has access to both parts, helping them to feel whole.

The Child Has Access to Answers

One of the biggest questions adopted individuals have is why did their birth parents make a plan. By having a relationship with the birth family, the child knows and understand not only why a plan was made, but that it was made with love and their adoptive parents were chosen just for them.

There are More People to Love the Child

An open adoption means that birth families and adoptive families come together to love and support the child. Many adoptive families can start out nervous about openness but in the end, wish for even more because they see the loving support system it creates for their child.

The Child Has Access to Medical Information and History

By having an open adoption, the adoptive family can receive access to important medical information. They also have access to information on genetics, ethnicity and other information about the birth family.

Refer a Patient

Do you have a patient you think would benefit from speaking to an Infant of Prague social worker about adoption? Every call is confidential and just because someone calls does not mean they have to make a plan of adoption.

Call us at (800) 994-2367. A social worker is on-call 24/7 and available to speak with anyone who has questions about parenting or open adoption.