

## **AGENCY POLICIES & PROCEDURES FOR PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS (DOMESTIC)**

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is committed to providing quality services to all clients of the agency.

The staff of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. acts with sensitivity to effectively address the unique needs of Prospective Adoptive Parents, Prospective Birth Parents.

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. does not give preferential treatment to anyone with respect to the placement of children for adoption.

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. provides adoption services ethically to ensure that all adoptions take place in the best interests of children and to prevent the abduction, exploitation, sale, or trafficking of children. The agency prohibits anyone from giving money as payment for a child or as inducement to release a child.

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is committed to treating all persons with respect, dignity and compassion, and welcomes all families regardless of race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, age, nationality or disability.

The adoption process is explained and reviewed in detail with all clients of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. The agency's adoption services and practices are fully disclosed in writing to prospective clients, including eligibility criteria and fees. Prospective Adoptive Parents are provided a Fee Agreement similar to the one they will be expected to sign.

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## **Prospective Adoptive Parents' Responsibilities**

Required paperwork must be completed by Prospective Adoptive Parents in a timely manner and the appropriate fees must be submitted with the paperwork or when billed.

Prospective Adoptive Parents must retain the services of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. before work may commence. This includes the following:

- Initial overview of process and agency services via telephone, email, written materials or possibly free informational meetings;
- The review and execution of the Pre-Orientation Information Form submitted with the appropriate fee and color photo;
- Attendance at the required orientation meeting;
- The review and execution of the Fee Agreement, and submission of the Fee Agreement to the agency with the appropriate fee;
- The review, execution, and submission of the Adoption Application Form to the agency to begin our relationship.

Prospective Adoptive Parents reserve the right to terminate the services of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. at any time as per the Fee Agreement.

## **Risks**

Prospective Adoptive Parents are made aware of the inherent risks of the adoption process and will be provided with disclaimers/limited waivers of liability within the Fee Agreement and additional disclaimers/limited waivers of liability upon placement.

Proposed adoptions have many risks, which may or may not be known at the time a match is made between Prospective Birth Parents and Prospective Adoptive Parents, or prior to or at the time a Prospective Adoptive Child is placed in that prospective adoptive home.

Prospective Adoptive Parents are aware that expenses paid to a prospective birth parent are paid at risk. Furthermore, information provided to the agency may be inaccurate or incorrect. A Prospective Adoptive Child's mental or physical development, emotional and or personality characteristics, health, inherited or genetic characteristics and other potential learning, physical or mental issues cannot be predicted.

The Prospective Adoptive Parents understand that they accept placement of the prospective adoptive child knowing that this a legal risk. The Prospective Birth Parents may revoke his/her/their surrender to the adoption within the legally allowed time frame or they may challenge the validity of their consent.

The Interstate Compact on Placement of Children ("ICPC") may be applicable and may impact the ability to travel "home" with the adoptive child. In addition, the applicability of the Indian Child Welfare Act ("ICWA") is dependent upon the status of the Prospective Birth Parents; Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. relies on statements by the Prospective Birth Parents to determine its applicability.

Determining the rights a "father" is complex and may pose a risk to the adoption. An unknown or unnamed Birth Father may appear and assert his rights and oppose the proposed adoption.

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Prospective Adoptive Parents understand these risks and wish to pursue an adoption plan knowing and assuming medical, legal and other risks of adoption, both pre and post adoptive placement.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is of utmost importance. No identifying information is disseminated by the agency unless the clients have authorized, in writing, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. to release this identifying information to any party related to their adoption.

## **Client Files**

Each client has a case file. All correspondence regarding the Prospective Adoptive Parent's adoption planning is carefully recorded and kept in their confidential file. This includes:

- Agency documents completed by the client
- Notes of any telephone or in person contact with the client
- Legal documents pertaining to their case
- Notes by social worker regarding counseling or home study services
- Home Studies
- All correspondence received or sent on the clients' behalf
- All documents or correspondence regarding a child

## **Orientation Meeting**

Prospective Adoptive Parents are required to participate in an orientation meeting with an agency representative to receive detailed information regarding what is required and expected of them during the adoption process. An orientation session fee applies. At this meeting, the Prospective Adoptive Parents review the necessary steps in the adoption process. This includes all paper work and procedures. In addition, examples of materials, such as the "Birth Parent Letter", are provided as applicable.

Prospective Adoptive Parents are encouraged to ask any questions they may have about the adoption process.

## **Fee Agreement**

The Fee Agreement is provided to Prospective Adoptive Parents and then thoroughly reviewed at the orientation meeting. The orientation includes discussion about any anticipated fees that may occur as a result of the adoption process and a review of the agency's refund policy as written in the Fee Agreement. Prospective Adoptive Parents are informed that work will not begin on their behalf until this Agreement is read, understood, executed, and in the possession of an agency representative. The Fee Agreement is a binding legal agreement and Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. reserves the right to collect from the clients any earned unpaid fees to the agency. The Fee Agreement explains, in detail, all services provided by the agency and fees charged by the agency.

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## **Adoption Application**

All Prospective Adoptive Parents must complete the agency's Adoption Application Form provided prior to or during the orientation meeting and discussed with an agency representative. Prospective Adoptive Parents must review the Application carefully and complete the Application in its entirety. Prospective Adoptive Parents are asked to return the Application, along with the Fee Agreement, and submit with payment to the agency, only after thorough review and completion when they are ready to proceed.

## **Client Expenses Account**

Each client of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is required to deposit funds into the agency Client Expenses Account so that Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. is able to submit payment directly to outside providers, as authorized by the Prospective Adoptive Parents, when services are rendered in connection with their adoption. The Fee Agreement provides, in detail, the purpose of the Client Expenses Account, and a thorough review and discussion takes place at the orientation.

## **Home Study**

A pre-placement Home Study must be completed. Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. ensures that the process fully complies with State regulations. The Prospective Adoptive Parents and/or any child or other household member will be interviewed by a social worker at least once in their home to ensure that the Prospective Adoptive Parents are ready and able to adopt. During the home study the social worker reviews the adoption process in detail to ensure the Prospective Adoptive Parents' full understanding. Discussions include reasons for adoption, the needs of children available for adoption, concerns or questions about the process, the psychological issues that surround adoption, the impact on the family, and characteristics of the applicants including age, health, marital status, fertility, family composition and other topics. In compliance with state and federal regulations, applicants are asked for references, medical reports, child abuse clearances and criminal history. New York State requires Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. to conduct both criminal and child abuse clearances on prospective adoptive parents, even when they have been pre-certified by a court or have had a home study completed by an outside agency or private social worker. The home study preparer will complete a report in accordance with New York State law.

The post-placement home study(ies) will be conducted after the placement of a child. The same procedure is followed as the pre-placement report. Fees for home study services are charged to the Prospective/Adoptive Parents as set forth in the Fee Agreement.

## **Adoption / Parent Training**

Prospective Adoptive Parents are required by Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. to complete a minimum of ten (10) hours of adoption/parent training as suggested by NY State regulations and mandated by the Hague Adoption Convention. Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will also provide suggested courses and available resources for completing such training. The training may include attendance at conferences or workshops, on-line adoption courses, additional written materials, and counseling, and the specific issues related to the adoption of a particular child. Prospective Adoptive Parents are responsible for contracting with other training service providers directly and must provide certificates or other proof of course attendance and completion in order for Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. to approve and ensure that the Prospective Adoptive Parents have received the appropriate adoption/parent training.

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## **Outreach**

Prospective Adoptive Parents may work with an agency representative in their outreach and networking efforts. This includes completion of a "Birth Parent Letter." Examples of this Letter are made available to the Prospective Adoptive Parents during the orientation meeting. The agency assists the Prospective Adoptive Parents with the format of the letter (pictures, text, paper type, etc.) In addition, the agency reviews the drafts of the letter. However, it is the primary responsibility of the Prospective Adoptive Parents to complete and print/bind this Letter. If they choose, the Prospective Adoptive Parents may also make coordinating "business"/adoption cards to be mailed to various contacts and to also consider print ads.

In addition, websites and internet advertising are discussed and materials with information about this process are provided to the Prospective Adoptive Parents. Ultimately, the Prospective Adoptive Parents are in control of what outreach strategies they would prefer to utilize for networking. The agency representative may suggest best possible techniques for networking based on their judgment and past experiences.

Prospective Adoptive Parents may have a toll-free (800#) installed in order to speak with Prospective Birth Parents who are interested in communicating. Prospective Adoptive Parents are also given the option to have ads placed specifically for them and calls answered by the agency; additional fees for these services are detailed in the Fee Agreement.

## **Counseling Services**

Prospective Adoptive Parents are made aware of the potential emotional and mental stresses that can be part of the adoption process and that private counseling is available as needed as per the Fee Agreement. This counseling may also address unresolved issues surrounding infertility if needed.

Should the Prospective Adoptive Parents utilize the additional counseling at any time during the adoption process, they will be billed for these sessions as per the Fee Agreement. Counseling services can be provided by the agency or an outside resource. Should a referral need to be made, Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will assist its clients in locating an appropriate provider.

## **Provision of Medical and Social Information**

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. does not withhold from or misrepresent to Prospective Adoptive Parents any available medical, social or other pertinent information concerning the Prospective Adoptive Child.

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. encourages Prospective Adoptive Parents to consider the needs of the Prospective Adoptive Child and their ability to meet those needs and to obtain physician review of medical information and other descriptive information prior to accepting a "match" with a prospective adoptive child.

Prospective Adoptive Parents retain the option to decline a proposed match or intended placement.

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## **Legal Services**

The Prospective Adoptive Parents are made aware of their need to retain separate legal counsel for finalization of the adoption. If appropriate and/or necessary, the staff of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. will also make appearances in Court. The Fee Agreement contains the fees associated with the legal services provided by Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. The Fee Agreement also describes fees associated with possible Pre/Post Adoption Extraordinary Services such as, but not limited to, Hearings / Contested Adoptions / Appeals / Due Diligence Searches.

## **Contact with Prospective Birth Parents (Pre and Post Placement)**

Prospective Adoptive Parents and Prospective Birth Parents may have pre and or post placement communication. These may be supervised and/or arranged through Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. and may include:

- In-person meeting with the Prospective Birth Parents ;
- Telephone or Skype meeting with the Prospective Birth Parents ;
- Contact in writing through letters, photographs and information about each party.

All contact, correspondence, and meetings are carefully recorded in detail and kept in the client files. Any correspondence between the Prospective Birth Parents and Prospective Adoptive Parents after the placement of a child must be agreed upon by the two parties. Parties may execute an agreement which sets forth the terms and conditions of any post-placement contact.

## **Post Placement Services**

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. provides post-placement and post-adoption monitoring, supervision, and reporting in accordance with the requirements of the Hague Adoption Convention, the laws of the child's County of Origin, and State law.

## **Complaint Resolution Process**

We want to ensure that you are completely satisfied with the adoption process when you work with Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. As a prospective client, you are receiving this policy so that you are aware of the complaint procedures prior to retaining our services. If at any time throughout the process, you believe that any of the services or activities of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. raise an issue of compliance with applicable regulations, policies, laws, the Hague Convention, the Intercountry Adoption Act (IAA) or the regulations implementing the IAA, you should communicate your concerns directly to the employee of Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. with whom you have the complaint.

If, after your initial verbal communication, you are still not satisfied, please contact the Executive Director, Joy S. Goldstein. If still not resolved within five (5) business days, you must submit a written complaint, signed and dated, to the Executive Director and provide a copy to the President of the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will have thirty (30) days to respond in writing to your request. An expedited review in ten (10) days will be provided for complaints that are time-sensitive or involve allegations of fraud.

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If you remain dissatisfied after receiving a response from the Executive Director, you may continue the process through Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.'s Board of Directors or with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Submit copies of all letters and papers that explain your complaint to:

New York State Office of Children and Family Services  
Capital View Office Park  
52 Washington Street  
Rensselaer, New York 12144-2796  
Phone: (518) 473-7793  
Fax: (518) 486-7550

Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc. looks forward to working with you and we encourage you to ask any questions or express any concerns you may have at any time.

We have received and reviewed this document and intend to proceed with the services provided by Forever Families Through Adoption, Inc.

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Adoptive Parent

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Adoptive Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date