



QUESTIONS TO ASK
about Parent-Initiated Adoption and Identified Adoption (# 41)

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Some couples and individuals choose parent-initiated adoption, also called private or independent adoption. This type of adoption occurs when a prospective adoptive parent or an intermediary other than a licensed adoption agency makes contact with a birth-mother who is planning to release her child for adoption. (An intermediary could be a doctor, clergy person, friend, relative, lawyer, etc.) If you are considering doing a parent-initiated adoption, you should consider the following issues:

- \$ How aggressive and open about finding a birth-mother do you and your partner want to be? Do you want to use an intermediary in an effort to recruit a birth-mother?
- \$ If so, are you willing to do mailings and place ads to recruit potential birth-mothers and have a separate post office box and install a telephone line for potential birth-mothers to contact you?
- \$ Have you reviewed the laws on adoption in your state? If the birth-parents live in another state are you aware that you will need to hire a lawyer in both your state of residency and the birth-parent=s state? (Make sure both lawyers are knowledgeable about the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.)
- \$ Are you aware that in many states, the birth-parents retain the right to change their minds about releasing their baby for adoption even after they have signed the relinquishment contract? The length of time in which a birth-parent can change their mind varies from hours, weeks or even months depending on the state where the birth-parents reside.
- \$ Are you aware that the birth-father=s rights also have to be terminated? If the birth-father is unknown or absent, certain steps have to be taken before the baby is legally available for adoption. These include publication in local newspapers of the baby=s birth and request for the birth father to contact an intermediary in a specific amount of time.
- \$ Are you aware of the need for the birth-parents to receive good pre-adoption counseling to reduce the risk that they will change their minds about releasing the child for adoption after the birth of the child?
- \$ Are you aware that many states have guidelines about what are considered allowable expenses to pay birth-parents? These usually consist of living expenses such as rent, clothing, food and medications while pregnant. It is illegal for a baby to be bought or sold; you jeopardize an adoption if you offer a birth-parent money for a car, tuition or future financial help in exchange for agreeing to release their baby for adoption.

In states where using an adoption agency is required, couples or individuals can consider identified adoption. In this situation, prospective adoptive parents find a birth-mother and then put her in touch with a licensed adoption agency who then does the counseling and legal work that is necessary. If after giving birth, the birth-mother follows through with her plan to release the baby for adoption, it would be placed with the individual or couple who identified the birth-mother and directed her to the adoption agency. In both parent-initiated and identified adoption, it is necessary for the prospective adoptive parents to complete a homestudy with a licensed agency or social worker before an adoption is finalized.