



Information Packet

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Considering Adoption?

Here's What You Need to Know!

If you would like to consider adopting a child in the US through private, domestic adoption, here are a few tips to make your adoption search successful.

Our professional contacts --

A Step Ahead Adoption Services (ASA) has developed relationships with over 30 different adoption agencies and attorneys throughout the US. As a result, it is fairly common for our clients to adopt in 1 year or less.

Race & Gender --

The more open you are on gender and race, the more birth parent cases you can review. We do accept clients who are race and/or gender specific, but realize that often diminishes the many options that could be available to your family. If you are race & gender specific, you may have a much longer wait!

Cost of Adoption --

The median cost of an adoption placement through the providers, with whom we work, is ranging in the \$35-\$50K range. We can get a case below \$35K, but we want to be straightforward about the possible case costs for a placement of a newborn or infant.

Where Would We Go for an Adoption?

Most of the providers with whom we work are located in these states: AL, AZ, CA, FL, GA, KS, ME, NC, ND, NV, OK, SC, TX and WA. If you research the adoption laws in these states, you'll learn that they tend to be considered "adoption friendly" states for adoptive parents.

Adoption Communication --

We are always asked about the level of "openness" for adoptive parents. We don't have a policy on adoption communication, but choose to educate you on the differences between closed, semi-open and open adoption. Again, the more options you provide us, the more choices you may have on a case we can present.

The ASA Service Package --

Our service package is in 3 phases:

- (1) Adoption preparation, home study education, profile development assistance, and education;
- (2) Once "approved & waiting" we network our clients with the various adoption providers in the US; unlike other consulting services, you do not have to formally apply to agencies and attorneys to show your profile. Our unique relationships allow you a courtesy showing to birth parents desiring to make an adoption plan.
- (3) Placement-to-finalization, you enter this last phase once you have adopted and we stay with you through the post placement time of your adoption. Unlike our competitors, we stay with you through finalization.



Checklist


of Domestic Adoption Services

As a “client” you can expect:

- ✓ A Finance Coach will assist you with all financial preparation you may need for your adoption. This time is for you to have a review of your existing finances and assistance in locating funds for your adoption.
- ✓ One hour of birthparent consulting -- (we have two consultants who are birthparents and have placed children for adoption). This time is scheduled prior to your meeting a birthparent or having a phone interview. Our clients say they learn a tremendous amount from these consultants.
- ✓ A one hour conversation with an adult adoptee who was placed through domestic adoption. We call this the “Adoptee Perspective” consultation. Our families schedule this during their post-placement to review such items as developmental milestones, special needs issues that may arise or questions about necessary therapeutic interventions for their children.
- ✓ Six hours of webinar classes you can take throughout the time you are with our service.
- ✓ eAdopt – Your educational portal! You will be assigned reading material based on each phase of your adoption journey. No additional software is required as this is an internet-based system. Your eAdopt account will provide you with over 80 documents on adoption and parenting topics.
- ✓ eLearning Course .. we work with a service that provides you a a 2-hour class online. This class is an excellent way to begin your adoption journey and better understand what expectant and birth parents seek in adoptive families.
- ✓ Access to our password-protected video library on our website. The video library includes a 20-minute class on domestic adoption and 45 (2-5 minute) video vignettes recorded by adoptees, adoptive moms and an occupational therapist.

10 Steps for Joining



1. Choose a browser
(*Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari* – Internet Explorer does not work well with our forms)
2. Complete our online application: www.asteaheadadoption.com
3. Click *Forms*
4. Click on *Application Form* (it takes 20-30 minutes to complete)
5. Look for our *confirmation email*. Once your application is complete, we receive a message that your family is in the “queue” and we will confirm with an email or a phone call.
6. Sign & date the *Authorization Release Form* (page 10)
7. Sign & date the *Fee Service Agreement Form* (page 11)
8. Send both forms to the home office in North Carolina through email, fax or US Mail (contact points below)
9. Arrange payment by credit card either on our website through Pay Pal or over the phone with Diane Hogan  Send a personal check to the NC office payable to:
A Step Ahead Adoption Services
1822-6 S. Glenburnie Rd., PMB 355
New Bern, NC 28562
10. When all “steps” above are completed you will be assigned your personal adoption consultant as we guide your heart every step of your journey!

Authorization to Release



Obtain Information

I/We (CLIENTS) authorize you to give A Step Ahead Adoption Services (COMPANY) and its consultants all information you have as to my/our adoption. This authorization includes, but is not limited to, the release of information in connection with any pre-, current and post-adoption paperwork, medical information and placement information. I/We understand that this information obtained will be used to help evaluate and facilitate my/our adoption with your agency. Furthermore, we release A Step Ahead Adoption Services from any unintentional wrongdoing in regards to my/our adoption.

Signature of Adoptive Parent (CLIENT)

Date

Signature of Adoptive Parent (CLIENT)

Date

Print Last Name (s)

Fee Service Agreement



Full Service Adoption Plan

I/We (aka CLIENT/S) accept the Fee Service Agreement of **\$3,800** adoption services fee for adoption planning education, referral, and support services (*\$500 application fee + \$3,300 adoption services flat fee*) offered by A Step Ahead Adoption Services and its consultants (aka COMPANY). A Step Ahead Adoption Services agrees to provide the above-listed services, pre-adoption through post-placement. This service agreement is a 1-year commitment between the CLIENT and the COMPANY.

By signing this form, we agree to the total fee service and realize the funds we invest are NON-REFUNDABLE*. Further, we release A Step Ahead Adoption Services (COMPANY) from any unintentional wrongdoing in regards to my/our adoption plan.

Definition of full service adoption plan- A Step Ahead Adoptions will provide adoption planning, education, referral, and support services. However, A Step Ahead Adoption are not attorneys and therefore cannot give any legal advice, concerning adoption and any legal questions should be referred to your attorney. A Step Ahead Adoption cannot control the outcome of these cases. Therefore, the results are not guaranteed and there can be several unforeseen circumstances in this process that may result in no adoption being held. Also, failure on your part on providing the detailed information needed in order to evaluate your adoption possibilities, and failure on your part to honestly and completely disclose all the information requested may also result in the adoption not being completed. Step Ahead Adoption does not provide legal services in this contract, and like any contract should be reviewed with your attorney.

This contract is entered into in Colorado and therefore, venue and jurisdiction is proper in Colorado. If either party needs to take legal action to enforce this contract, the prevailing party will be awarded reasonable attorney fees and cost of that action.

At the discretion of the company for special circumstances you may request a partial refund. All requests must be in writing, letter or email and any refund is purely at the discretion of the company.

We agree that all information that we have given is accurate and complete to the best of our knowledge.

ACTIVE MILITARY FAMILIES RECEIVE A 10% DISCOUNT with A Step Ahead Adoption Services.

Signature of Adoptive Parent (CLIENT)

Date

Signature of Adoptive Parent (CLIENT)

Date

Signature of President (COMPANY)

Date

Why Use an Adoption Consultant

What Is An Adoption Consultant?

A qualified Adoption Consultant will provide you with the education, support and guidance that will assist you in making the best decisions for your family throughout the adoption process, from start through finalization. Consultants are your adoption advocates throughout the process. They are well-versed in each state's adoption laws as well as the philosophies and reputations of the adoption agencies that they choose to work with, and will assist you in creating as many opportunities as possible for your family to receive your adoptive match and bring your child home. Many adoption consultants do not just have the professional expertise to fulfill their roles; they often have personal experience in being a member of the adoption triad and can share with you their first-hand experiences in adoption. They can assist you in creating your family profile book, provide financial education regarding various tax credits and grants, and help in explaining the fees and costs for adoption-related services. You can rely on your consultant to answer questions regarding travel advice if you are completing an interstate adoption, discussing adoption-related issues with extended family and friends, and providing a 'shoulder to lean on' in general throughout your adoption journey. *(This information is reprinted with the permission of Adoption & Family Support Center, FL)*

How Do Your Client Families Achieve an Adoption?

ASA has been in business for 20 years. During that time, we have worked hard to build a relationship with 30+ different adoption providers (agencies and attorneys) who have the legal authority to place a child for adoption. Due to our unique working relationship, these 40+ adoption providers allow our client families to have a profile shown to a prospective birth parent(s) at no legal or financial obligation. If the adoptive client family should be selected by the birth parent(s) and accept the "match," then and only then do they make a financial and legal commitment to that adoption provider. Prior to a "match" our client families are able to wait on their financial or legal commitments and have a greater opportunity to view information from a variety of agencies and attorneys.

What Services Are Provided by an Adoption Consultant?

When a prospective family enrolls with ASA they are assigned a personal adoption consultant. Typically the adoptive family is allowed to select the consultant with whom they would like to work, but if unsure, the company's president will assist the adoptive family with the best choice of a consultant. Your consultant is responsible for guiding you through the adoption process from the point you enter our service plan. If you are completely new to adoption, your consultant begins with home study agency referrals, adoption education and profile development assistance. If you come to us as a "professional referral" from an agency, social worker or attorney, your consultant picks up with your adoption plan at whatever point you enter our services. We stay with your family from that unique beginning point through placement with your adoption provider and finalization.

Our service package includes: adoption home study referral, adoption education & parenting education, personal adoption guidance & support, ancillary adoption services (i.e., legal, financial, child development, birth parent communication), profile design assistance, networking/adoption provider referrals, and post adoption support. We have documented that we spend 60-100 hours per client family with our adoption consulting services.

Do You Advertise and Do Direct Matching with Birth Parents?

No ... we view that as adoption facilitation and that is not part of our service package. Instead, we reach out to the 30+ adoption providers with whom we have built personal and professional relationships. They let us know about prospective birth parent(s) and we then refer the adoptive family to that provider if they wish to submit a profile for consideration.

Why Use an Adoption Consultant

What Education Do You Provide?

We have partnered with a service, eAdopt, to give our client families a private electronic portal for the most current adoption and parenting information. Currently (2013) we have over 80 documents of valuable educational information we share with each client family. Some states have education requirements. If the adoptive family resides in a state where adoption and parenting education hours are required, we will validate your hours of education, provide a certificate of completion and a print out of the dated, completed topics.

Do You Work With Families From All the US States?

Currently (2013) we cannot work with families who are residents of NJ, NM, or NY.

Do You Work with Adoption Providers in all US States?

We have built relationships with adoption providers in the most “adoption friendly” states of the US. That is not to say we won’t work with every state that permits our services, but most of our client families prefer to take placement through agencies/attorneys in states that have adoption regulations favorable to an irrevocable placement.

Do You Require a Specific Level of Adoption Communication?

No we do not have a requirement of closed, semi-open or open. We have a very diverse view of adoption communication. We believe that the adoption communication between an adoptive family and a birth family should be mutually beneficial and often that cannot be defined pre-match. We do educate our adoptive families on their various ways both families communicate with one another pre-birth and post-placement. All of our consultants come with a variety of their own experiences in closed, semi-open and open adoption communication.

Is There a Requirement of Faith, Race or Marital Status?

We work with all types of families from single persons, married couples (traditional and same sex), domestic partnerships and common law couples. We accept all faiths and races.

Our guiding principal is your family is able to successfully complete a home study and provide a stable home with unconditional love for a child/children. We do request you have a brief phone interview with the president of our organization to assess if your priorities match our service abilities. We do request if you are a couple that you have been together at least 1 year (partnership or marriage) before applying to our program.

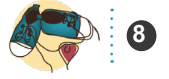
How Do We/I Budget for An Adoption?

Since we are unsure of where and through whom you will adopt, we suggest you plan on a minimum of \$35,000 for an adoption placement. That fee will be paid to the “placing” entity (agency or attorney) from whom you receive your adopted child. Some adoptions are less than \$35K and some more.

How Long Do You Work with Your Client Families?

We ask everyone to sign a Fee Service Agreement that binds us to our client families for 1 year from signing on with our services. If the family becomes dissatisfied, they may disengage any time during that year but no refund is offered.

Networking



Domestic Adoption

At A Step Ahead Adoption Services, we use the term “networking” to identify the process of contacting adoption providers (agencies and attorneys) through phone calls, e-mails and fax correspondence. All of the ASA consultants work as a team to help our families realize their dreams of becoming parents through adoption. Because we have worked over the past 12 years to develop long-lasting relationships with adoption professionals, we have a “network” of agencies and attorneys who depend on the quality of services we provide.

If you choose to network instead of signing on with one agency, you are opening the door to broader marketing of your family’s profile. Networking can be a cost-effective process for your family, but it is also an emotional roller coaster. It is your personal adoption consultant’s responsibility to keep you advised of cases, state laws, costs and any nuances to each case. You still have the right to accept or reject these cases – at no cost to your family!

Currently, our database includes approximately 30+ adoption providers (agencies & adoption attorneys). This database is constantly updated. If we have difficulty with an adoption provider, they are removed from the referral list. This way you can be assured of the best recommendations on a timely basis. Perhaps “networking” is a good choice for your family ... let us know!

Please know that we are always transparent in regards to the adoption provider’s name, location, state laws and financial expectation of the adoption plan. You are welcome to do your own research and “vetting” of the adoption providers. We welcome you involving your own home study provider and perhaps an attorney in your home state. Before you spend money to retain an attorney, check with your consultant on that necessity.