



Questions an expectant mom should ask an adoption professional

- ☐ Do you encourage modern adoption language?
- ☐ How are your employees and contract employees paid?
- ☐ Do they get percentages based on the "success" of different stages of the adoption journey, such as match, placement, finalization, etc.
- ☐ Are fees more or less depending on the situation, such as race of my child?
- ☐ What do you believe is the best adoption type (open, semi-open, or closed)?
- ☐ What type of adoption do you most often see?
- ☐ What requirements do you have for hopeful adoptive families?
- ☐ In what ways do you support me when I'm trying to decide if adoption is right for me?
- ☐ Do you support my decision if I parent and help me with parenting resources?
- ☐ If I take any "birth parent expenses" during my pregnancy, do you require that I pay those back if I choose to parent?
- ☐ Do you provide me with my own separate legal representative to advocate for my rights?
- ☐ Do you offer to fly expectant moms to the agency's home state and put her in a hotel until the baby is born?
- ☐ Is non-biased counseling provided during pregnancy and post-placement? If so, how long?
- ☐ Do I pay for my own counseling before or after placement?
- ☐ Do you reimburse for an outside therapist of my choice after placement? If so, how long?
- ☐ What other specific services do you provide birth mothers after placement for healing and getting back on their feet? If so, how long?
- ☐ Do you work in states where it's "easier" to terminate birth father rights?
- ☐ How do you handle cases where the father doesn't want to choose adoption or doesn't contest?
- ☐ What is your stance on creating a written adoption contact agreement (even if it can't be upheld in court)?
- ☐ Does my social worker attend the hospital with me for support?
- ☐ Will my social worker or any agency representative force me to sign relinquishment at the minimum time period that the state requires or can have as much time with my baby before choosing to sign?
- ☐ Do you provide options of hopeful adoptive families to choose from who will support the desired level of communication that I am looking for?
- ☐ Do you hold your adoptive parents to the open adoption agreement?
- ☐ Can I talk with other birth mothers who have worked with you before choosing to work with you?
- ☐ Can you walk me through your pre-match screening for hopeful adoptive parents who want to work with your agency?
- ☐ How can you ensure they will uphold their promises?
- ☐ What kind of pre-placement and post placement education do they receive? How is that reinforced by your agency?



Why Ask these questions?

YOU are important. Your rights are important. Your desires are important. Unfortunately, sometimes adoption agencies and professionals can view adoption simply as a business- a pay check- and not about the people's hearts and lives that are involved. These questions may help you uncover their motives and how they serve expectant parents considering adoption and how they support birth parents after placement. If you choose to pursue adoption, the professional you choose to walk alongside you should be a major support system where you always feel heard!

Red flags to look for!

Modern adoption language:

Question: Are they already referring to you as a birth mother, when you haven't signed relinquishment papers yet and are still deciding what option is best for you?

Answer: Adoption professionals should NEVER refer to a mama who is pregnant as a birth mom. Even if you are very determined in making an adoption plan and going through with it, you have every right to change your mind. During this time you are a mom who is expecting a baby.

Question: Do they talk about adoption as "giving up" or "giving away" still?

Answer: By making an adoption plan or following through with an adoption plan, a mom is NEVER giving up or giving away her child. There are many reasons a mom chooses adoption, but this choice is never a flippant one.

INSTEAD OF:

Giving up your baby
Choosing adoption
Keep your baby
Real parent
Birth parent
Adoptive parent
Adopted child
Is adopted
Failed adoption
Orphan

USE:

Placing in an adoption plan
Considering adoption
Parent your baby
Biological parent
Expectant parent (*before placement!*)
Parent
Child
Was adopted
Disrupted adoption
Adopted child

Learn how the agencies you are considering paying their employees:

Question: How do you pay your caseworkers?

Answer: Adoption professionals should never be paid on a pay scale. They should also never be paid in percentages based on how "successful" the case is. Example: Some adoption professionals are paid a percentage when you contact the agency and start your process with them. They will then be paid once you choose a family, then again when you sign relinquishment papers. This should never happen, so if an agency you are talking with says they do this, RUN!

Levels of openness you can choose from

Here are the different levels of openness that you can choose from:

Open

Semi-Open

Closed

Now, all of these can have a WIDE variety of what each level truly means, and much of that is guided by you! Ask the adoption professional you are considering or working with which level of openness they encourage and why. Hint: Professionals should encourage open most of the time!

What are some benefits of open adoption?

- Continued relationship with your child.
- Your child can have their medical questions answered.
- It can provide a child with more security in their identity as an adoptee.
- It helps you process your grief and have your questions answered in a more healthy way.

These are just a few benefits of open adoption. There are many other benefits that open adoption can bring to all members of the adoption triad (biological mom, adoptee, and adoptive parents). I would encourage you to listen to other birth moms who have placed and hear how the level of openness they have with their child has been both good and hard.

Is openness between birth parents and adoptive parents legally enforced?

Answer: Many states do not have laws in place that protect an agreement that is made between the birth parents and the adoptive parents, although there are some states that do. Regardless of the laws in the state in which you place, the adoption professional should still have a written agreement between you and the adoptive parents. The adoption professional should be following up with all parties to make sure the agreement is being upheld!

While you are pregnant - Agency do's and don'ts

While you are considering adoption, keep these in mind when choosing an agency....

- An adoption professional should provide options counseling and talk about your parenting options in depth. They should not show you hopeful adoptive parent profiles right away. You need time to talk through your plans and desires before going to the next step.
- Adoption professionals should always encourage you to involve the birth father. They should never encourage you to lie about him, where he lives, if he knows about the baby, etc. Honesty from the start about the relationship with the birth father and his feelings about the adoption plan is important.
- Adoption professionals should never encourage you to sign any relinquishment paperwork before the baby is born. This should always take place after the baby is born and on your timeline, not theirs (state laws on relinquishments do apply here also).
- Adoption professionals should always encourage you to be 100% honest and accurate in what you share on paper and with hopeful adoptive parents.
- Do not work with an agency who wants to fly you to another state so that placement can happen.

Post placement support should look like...

Your adoption professional should still support you in many ways after placement...

- You should always have non-judgemental and kind support.
- You should always have free, no cost professional counseling that you can utilize as you need and want it.
- Your adoption professional should provide lifetime support through support groups.

It's important that you have on-going access to support as you process your grief, heal and walk through your role in the adoption triad.