

BEGINNING THE ADOPTION PROCESS

All telephone calls to Adoption Resource Associates (ARA) are taken by an answering machine and are returned within 24 hours, barring unforeseen emergencies in our lives. If your call is very urgent and cannot wait as long as 24 hours for a response you may call 617.306.0051.

When a prospective adoptive parent calls ARA, the return call is utilized to identify the prospective client's reason for calling. This packet is the follow-up to your initial telephone call.

Please review the information in this packet. If you wish to proceed to the next step, call the office and make an appointment. Our introductory meeting is offered without charge. Please bring the completed Application Form to this meeting.

At the end of the initial 50 minute appointment we will decide jointly whether we should continue to work together; whether there are any unusual and potentially time consuming issues in your adoption application; and when we should meet again, if agency and client seem to be a good match.

The completed Responsibility Agreement and Contract, and payment of Home Study and Post Placement Supervision fee should be made at before or at the end of the first visit.

Time will be used most economically if you will complete and send your autobiography (one for each prospective parent) and your letters of recommendation so that they are received and can be reviewed prior to the second scheduled visit

CONSULTATION MEETING

For prospective adoptive parents not pursuing a home study, but wanting an overview of the adoption process, the staff of ARA is available to schedule an hour and fifteen-minute consultation outlining the domestic and international adoption process. The fee for this meeting is \$450.

The Three Phases of Every Adoption

The **First Phase** is the Home Study. You must be approved in this process to proceed to the search for and placement of a child.

The **Second Phase** is the Placement of a Child. This is the most complicated and time consuming and anxiety provoking period. You have to choose a route to your placement. You must develop your birth mother materials, engage in a search process, maintain a relationship with the birth parent, go through the delivery, and be approved to come home.

The **Third Phase** is the Post Placement Supervision period. This is usually the smoothest part of the journey and concludes with the finalization of the adoption.

Services for Adoptive Families

Whether you are just beginning to consider adoption, or have been researching your options and preparing yourself for this for years, you will find our helpful and knowledgeable staff ready to assist you with your next steps.

Adoptions can be a wonderful way to build your family. At Adoption Resource Associates, we understand that this process represents a tremendous emotional and financial investment for families. Our experienced, professional staff will provide counseling and help you make an informed decision about which type of adoption is right for you. We emphasize the importance of education for a successful adoption, and our staff is knowledgeable, supportive, and sensitive to families' needs. We understand adoption can be stressful and confusing process, so our staff provides highly personalized services and information, along with support throughout the process. We hope to ensure a smooth, successful adoption for each family.

THREE TYPES of ADOPTION

Domestic Infant Adoption: Also known as Domestic Adoption. With this type of adoption you will be matched with a birth mother while she is pregnant. Families are often present at the birth, and the child is generally placed directly from the hospital with the adoptive family. Adoption Resource Associates works with families in Massachusetts to provide adoption coordination, home studies, counseling, education, pre-adoptive, and post placement services; in some instances we provide child-placement services. We work in partnership with other licensed agencies, attorneys, and facilitators to help you locate a birthmother and provide child-placing services. Adoption Resource Associates believes openness in adoption is in the best interest of all members of the adoption triad, and supports and encourages a positive relationship between the family and the birth parents during the pregnancy. Post placement contact is generally in the form of pictures and letters, although some families choose to maintain ongoing direct contact. Adoption Resource Associates can also assist you with the Parent-Identified Adoption. In this case the adoptive family comes for services for an adoption with a known birth parent.

International Adoption: You may choose to adopt a child from an orphanage or foster care in another country. Adoption Resource Associates works in partnership with several Hague approved child-placing agencies, and can assist families with adoptions from a number of countries. We work with families in Massachusetts to provide home studies, counseling, education, and pre-adoptive and post placement services. We will assist with meeting immigration requirements, coordinating services with international agencies, and matching with an appropriate child from the country of your choice.

Special Needs Adoption: There are thousands of children in foster care throughout the United States waiting for families to adopt them. These children range in age from 0-15 years and may have special emotional, physical, or developmental needs. The majority of these children are over age 5, and they may have emotional or behavioral problems either as a result of parental abuse and neglect or because of the traumatic events and losses they have experienced. There is

no fee to adopt a child currently in foster care with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families. Adoption Resource Associates does not currently have a contract with DCF to provide this type of adoption, but is knowledgeable about it. If you are interested in considering this type of adoption, we are happy to provide information, education, and referrals to other agencies that can assist you.

Who can adopt? How long does it take? How much does it cost?

These are the three most common questions we receive. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers because they depend upon a number of factors.

Who can adopt? Almost anyone, who wants to and who can meet the standards outlined in state regulations.

Adoption Resource Associates will work with singles or couples, regardless of sexual orientation, race, religion, background, or ethnicity. You may be single, married, or divorced, with or without children, and may have a modest income. The main requirement is that you demonstrate your ability and commitment to provide a loving, safe home for a child in need of a family. Many people express concern about their age and worry that they are too old. The average adoptive parent is in their forties, and we have successfully placed with clients who are older.

International Adoption: While Adoption Resource Associates has no restrictions, many countries and placement programs do. We will help you locate a program that will work for you based on your specific situation. This may require you to be flexible with the age of your child or the country you adopt from, but so far we have been able to successfully locate a program for every client.

Domestic Infant Adoption: Birth parents choose adoptive parents, and many birth parents have a very specific idea of what they are looking for in adoptive parents. They may have a strong preference for age, marital status, religion, or sexual orientation. However, do not despair. There is someone out there for everyone! All families get chosen eventually, if you are patient.

How long does it take? This again is extremely variable depending upon the program you choose.

International: The average international adoption will take about 1-3 years or even longer. Each country is different. Your social worker will be able to give you the most current statistics, when you choose a country and a placement program.

Domestic: This program is even more variable, due to the fact that the birthmother chooses the family. It is impossible to know how long it will take for you to be chosen. The average domestic infant adoption takes about one to two years. If you are open to various situations (i.e., race,

special needs, unknown father, prenatal drug exposure), the wait will likely be shorter. The more selective you are (i.e., specifying sex), the fewer birth mothers eventually. Single parents and same sex couples do tend to take longer to be picked.

How much does it cost? This too can be very variable.

Please do not let cost keep you from adopting! We have completed adoptions with grants for as low as \$34,000. There are many possible sources of assistance to help pay for your adoption. Discuss your concerns with your social worker. Domestic adoptions average about \$60,000 with a range from \$60,000 and above. International adoption costs depend upon the country you choose and can range from \$34,000 to \$60,000 and above. However, do not let the cost be the deciding factor of the type of adoption you choose. It is important to choose the type of adoption that is right for you.

FEE SCHEDULE

The Home Study Fee pays for pre-placement services and post-placement supervision. Payment in full is due at the time of signing of the Responsibility Agreement and Contract or returned to the agency before the next scheduled meeting.

The Home Study Fee is \$6,100 (Home Study & Post Placement Supervision). There is an additional flat fee of \$400 for travel outside a 30-mile radius of our Cambridge office. The Case Management Fee covers all administrative fees for adoptions (Case Consultation, Preparation of ICPC materials, Receivership of ICPC, etc).

In some cases there are special circumstances that require a more complex and time-consuming home study process than is usually the case. If a significant amount of extra agency time must be used, there will be an additional charge of \$400 per hour. Every effort will be made to identify and discuss these extra charges before beginning the home study process.

Several countries (China, Haiti, Ethiopia, Armenia) require lengthier periods of post placement supervision than the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. There will be an additional fee for these services.

Home Study Comprehensive Services

Home Study	\$4,000
Post Placement Supervision	<u>\$2,100</u> <i>(Up to 3 visits; all additional visits require additional fees)</i>
Total	\$6,100

There is an additional \$400 fee for travel outside a 30-mile radius of our Cambridge office.
Single Post Placement Report \$700
One-time Consultation Meeting \$400

Additional Services

Co-parent Adoption Home Study – fee to be negotiated

Case Management Fee - \$2,500+ (for domestic receivership of ICPC or International HS cases)
Home Studies are considered current for one year from the completion date.
Home Study Update Fee after first year - \$2,000

THE HOME STUDY

A home study by an adoption agency licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is necessary for all adoptions legally finalized in Massachusetts. The US Immigration and Naturalization Service also requires a completed home study in order to process an international adoption; all foreign countries also require such a study.

The home study also serves as a process in which the prospective adoptive parent(s) can investigate and explore important issues in the adoption experience. Through this process prospective adoptive parents will, it is hoped, learn more about themselves and thus be able to make fully informed decisions. The process should be helpful, pleasant, and growth enhancing.

Home study interviews will explore these issues, among others:

1. Reasons for adoption.
2. Significant adult relationships.
3. Evidence of emotional maturity.
4. Attention paid to difficult issues carried into adulthood from family of origin.
5. Issues (if any) of infertility.
6. Ability of the adoptive parent(s) to nurture another.
7. Ability to seek and use appropriate sources of nurturance for self.
8. Ability to confront and resolve conflict.
9. Dreams, hopes, and fears about adopted child.

A minimum of three separate interviews will be conducted; at least one of these interviews will take place in the prospective adoptive home.

A completed, signed, and notarized home study report will be ready no later than several weeks after the final interview.

DOCUMENTS NEEDED FOR THE HOME STUDY

Autobiography: As soon as possible, you should send us an autobiography of 500-1,000 words; this information will help us focus and shape the home Study interviews. Consider these topics, among others:

- your childhood, relationships in your family of origin, present contacts with family members;

- your significant relationships as an adult; your present domestic situation – other people, permanency and security, satisfactions and concerns; your education, training, and work – as presently established;
- hopes for the future, concerns; prior experience with childcare – ages of children, satisfactions and frustrations, strengths and the hard times, your thoughts about discipline;
- how you cope with fatigue, disappointment, anger, loss, too little sleep, frustration;
- what do you have to offer a child, and how do you expect to grow and be satisfied through the adoption of a child?

Any topic that you believe is relevant to your home study is appropriate for this autobiography.

Physician's statement: Please obtain a short statement from your physician about the potential effects of the kind of adoption you hope to complete on your present and future health and well-being.

Financial statement: Please provide us with the first page of your IRS Form 1040 for the past year.

Letters of recommendation: Please ask three people who know you well to describe qualities that they believe will enable you to take care of an adopted child, and any reserves they might have about your plans for an adoption.

Birth certificate(s)

Marriage certificate(s) (if applicable)

Divorce decree (if applicable)

CHOOSING A PLACEMENT AGENCY

We suggest that you choose a placement agency according to reputation for reliability. We are prepared to make recommendations of placement agencies that should be able to help you find the kind of child that you think you are best able to take care of. We will only recommend agencies that we have investigated and have reason to believe are able to carry through and do what they tell you they will do for you.

There are many stories of attempted adoptions that turn into disappointments. We want to try to help you avoid those disappointments (of time, money, bureaucratic entanglements, etc.) and also to help you cope with the delays and uncertainties that seem to be inevitable in this complex process. You must understand, however, that we cannot guarantee that your adoption will go smoothly or even that there will not be an unforeseen disappointment. We can only promise that we at Adoption Resource Associates will do our best to make your entire adoption process go as smoothly as possible.

Here are some questions to ask about the child you want:

1. Do I need this child to be a girl or a boy? Why?
2. How would I feel about a child from another culture, especially a child from a country where there is much poverty?
3. If my adopted child has a different racial/ethnic heritage than I, do I look forward to his or her different social experiences as challenges or as problems?
4. Can I begin to take care of an older child who has, perhaps, had discrepant family experiences in his or her past, or do I want my child to be an infant when we meet? Why?
5. Would I willingly accept into my family a child with a known history that predicts or explains emotional disturbance? With known developmental delays? With a visible deformity?
6. How will I feel if it is discovered only later that the child has an emotional, developmental, or physical disability because of his or her early history? Do I hope for guarantees?

Our agency willingly collaborates with any legitimate resource; we will help you with domestic as well as international adoptions.

POST PLACEMENT SUPERVISION AND LEGAL FINALIZATION

Massachusetts state law requires that it be determined that the “petitioners and their home are suitable for the proper rearing of the child” before an adoption can be legally finalized. This determination will be made in the form of a report to the Probate Court based on three visits with the adoptive family. These visits will take place during the first six months that your child is placed in your home. A child must be in your home for six months before the adoptive parents can petition for finalization.

The process of Post Placement Supervision should not be a burden; we strive to make it helpful and pleasant, bringing all our resources and experience to your own situation.

When six months have passed we will prepare the Post Placement Supervision Report and refer you to an attorney who will represent you at the adoption proceeding in Court.

AVAILABILITY FOR FOLLOW-UP

By the time your adoption has been legally finalized we know you very well, and you know us. We pledge availability to you for as long as Adoption Resource Associates continues to function.

Many adoptive parents find that when they encounter bumps and bruises in the events of parenting – as all parents do – they are inclined to think that their special troubles are caused by or at least related to the facts of adoption. While this is definitely not the case (adoptive parents experience pretty much the same problems as do non-adoptive parents) it does mean that a

process of family counseling that is sensitive to and knowledgeable about adoption is particularly helpful.

In addition, when children of color inevitably encounter the racism that continues to be prevalent in our culture, and their parents' struggle with these stresses, counseling services that address these particular situations can be extraordinarily helpful.

THE SEARCH

In adoptions finalized today there is a strong likelihood of an "open" process in which the adoptee, the birth mother (and in some cases the biological father), and the adoptive parents have some information about each other and are able to create a plan for staying in touch. In past years, however, secrecy among parties on all three sides of the triangle was thought to be beneficial and necessary for a successful adoption, and sometimes was even required by law.

For adoptees who have not been able to stay in touch with their biological parents, the possibility of a search often becomes an important issue in adulthood. Reasons for trying to make contact, and the nature of that contact, should be carefully considered. Beginning the process of such a search is an event of great moment.

Adoptees who know some information about their biological parents may also wish for some guidance, counseling, and support in confronting their hopes, fears, needs, and apprehensions in relation to making contact with those biological parents. When the adoptee is still a minor the adoptive parents are necessarily involved with the process as well.

We are experienced and knowledgeable in the search process, from the perspective of all three sides of the triangle – birth mothers and biological fathers, adoptees, and adoptive parents – and are available to assist in that process.

