

## Issues Surrounding Adoption

Adopting a child can seem like a cut and dry issue. There are lengthy adoption lists filled with names of children who need love and support and, there are countless caring adults who are ready to take in these children with open arms. The legal adoption process seems like a simple, "win-win" situation.

If you're thinking about adopting a child, you need to consider every angle of your decision. Beyond the complicated legal implications, there are also a number of personal issues surrounding adoption that can affect you, and the child. Single parents, couples, and families considering legal adoption must think carefully about every one of these issues, before they move forward into the adoption process.

### Parental Infertility

Many couples choose to adopt because they are not able to naturally conceive or carry a child. Of course, adoption is a wonderful alternative for those parents who wish to share their lives and nurture a child, but it's important to explore the possible emotional difficulties that one or both parents can face. Some parents spend years worrying about the child's unknown genetic background or biological influences. Others harbor guilt or even remorse, as they never really bond with the child and accept him or her as "their own". In cases where the birth parent or parents retain the right to see their biological child, legal visitation and transfer of parental rights can create serious problems. Also, there may be a time when the couple is able to conceive, and they need to consider if they will treat the adopted daughter or son differently from their adopted child.

### Children's Health and Development

Over the years, numerous studies have been conducted to determine the effects of adoption on the physical and emotional health and growth of the child. While young adopted children seem to adjust quite naturally, problems can arise when these children grow older. The issues surrounding adoption that can creep up in the child's later years may include feelings of separation, anger, loss of identity and even grief. These are natural responses that must be dealt with in a professional and positive way. It's vital for the adopting parents to know and understand how their child may act out, and why she or he acts this way. Throughout this emotional roller coaster ride, parents need to be supportive of their child's needs and wishes, and offer constant reassurance that the child is safe, secure, loved and above all, wanted. All children, whether adopted or biological, have a better chance of growing up emotionally strong and secure with parents who are willing to show and prove their love.

### Risks

Adoption is a major undertaking, so of course there will be risks. These risks can be legal, financial, medical or emotional. Parents who are considering adoption need to accept the uncertainties, and be prepared to deal with any consequences that may arise. One of the best ways to lessen the chances of risk is by working with a known and respected child adoption agency. Professional agents will work with you, and with the agents of the adoptive children, to find the match that best suits everyone's needs and wishes. Prospective parents should speak with caseworkers, counselors and attorneys throughout the adoption process. They need to find out everything they can about the child, and they must disclose their own personal information as well. Remember, this is a big risk for you, but it's an even bigger one for the child. He or she is about to begin an entirely new life, and unexpected surprises can be devastating.

### Other Issues

Welcoming a child into your heart and your home involves many issues. The child's personality development, behavior and even his or her sexuality can be affected by both the adoption process, and by his or her relationship while growing up in the adoptive home.

Before you begin the legal process, consider each and every one of these issues surrounding adoption. Speak to adoption professionals, talk to lawyers and attend family counseling sessions with your partner. Being open and honest about your hopes and your fears today will help you to establish a happier, more secure life for your adopted child.