A Brief on Adoption Options

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Adoption Options

When it comes to adoption, there are a lot of choices that must be made. First you must choose if you want an open or closed adoption. Next you must choose where you would like to adopt from, whether it be domestic or international. Do you plan on going through an agency or adopting privately? Wait, your decisions don’t end there. There are many more decisions to come such as the age, sex, race, and personality of the child you would like to adopt.

There are many reasons why adoptive parents choose the way they do such as security, cost, and peace of mind. Many choose to adopt internationally to reduce the chances of the biological parent trying to take the child back. Others choose to adopt domestically or a foster adoption to reduce the cost associated with the adoption.

Open VS Closed Adoptions

What is the difference in an open and closed adoption? With an open adoption there is continued communication with the biological parent or parents. The adoptive parents and biological parents communicate prior to the child being born and often after the child is born. Communication may include phone calls, mail, and even face to face visits. With an open adoption the child knows that they are adopted and who their biological parents are. This reduces confusion later in their life. With a closed adoption the biological parents and the adoptive parents stay confidential with no communication prior to the birth or after the birth.

At least half of domestic agency infant adoptions involve the birthparent meeting the adoptive parents and choosing the family whom they feel the most comfortable with, consequently, adoptive parents who insist on a closed domestic agency infant adoption often have a much longer wait. (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012)

Other options such as semi-open adoptions and identified adoptions may also be available. In a semi-open adoption the biological parents and adoptive parents usually know basic information about each other such as their names and the state that they reside in, but contact information is kept confidential. The biological parents and adoptive parents may communicate prior to the adoption, but after the adoption if they choose to stay in contact they must do so through a third party such as an adoption agency. In an identified adoption the birthmother may choose the family that will adopt her child, but may not actually meet them.

Often adoptive families change their mind after the adoption and choose to have a more open adoption after meeting the biological parents. However, sometimes it is the exact opposite and they choose to have a more closed adoption after meeting with the biological parents. These are called an evolving relationships.

Domestic VS International Adoptions
What is the difference in a domestic and international adoption? Adoptions within one’s own country are domestic adoptions. Domestic adoptions can be either intrastate or interstate depending on whether the child is from the same state as the adoptive parents or a different state. If the child and the adoptive parents live in the same state than the adoption would be considered an intrastate adoption, but if they live in different states it would be considered an interstate adoption. Interstate adoptions can be a little more difficult than intrastate adoptions because each state has its own laws, and while they are all similar they are all have their differences.

What about adopting a child from another country? Adopting a child from another country is an international adoption. “In 2011 Americans adopted 9,319 international children.” (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012) When adopting internationally an adoptive parent must choose whether to adopt from a country that is part of The Hague Convention or one that is not. The Hague Convention is an international agreement among several countries that was concluded on May 29, 1993 establishing international standards of practices for intercountry adoptions. If the country chosen is part of the Hague Convention than the adoption must meet the requirements of the state, both countries involved, and the Hague Convention. If the country is not part of The Hague Convention the adoption must still meet the requirements of the state and both countries. An international adoption is usually the most costly due to travel expenses incurred. “The average total cost of an international adoption can range from $15,000 to $50,000 depending on the amount of travel required and other requirements.” (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012)

Another option is a foster care adoption. “In 2010, it is estimated that Americans adopted about 52,891 children from the U.S. public foster-care system.” (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012) Children are placed into foster care by their parents or by the court because of their parents’ inability to take care of them for one reason or another. Children who are in foster care are often victims of abuse and neglect, and may have special needs. They are usually older children who may have siblings. The average age of a foster care child is 8.1 years old, and most are considered to have special needs due to age, part of a minority or sibling group, or physical, mental, or behavioral disabilities. (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012) These children are looked after by licensed foster parents until their parents’ parental rights are terminated, and then are eligible for adoption. The foster parents get an opportunity to adopt them, but if they choose not to than the children begin the process of being matched with an adoptive family. After their waiting period the child may then be legally adopted. This type of adoption will usually be a closed adoption. Adopting a foster child is the cheapest way to adopt, but also carries the most risk.

The average total cost of a foster adoption can range from $1,500 to $3,500 in initial expenses, but are usually reimbursed. In 2012 a majority of foster care adoptive families received a federal tax credit of $12,650 regardless of their actual expenses. (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012)

One risk in adopting a foster care child is that the birthparent can appeal the court’s decision to terminate their parental rights in a foster care adoption, but they only have a limited time after
their rights are terminated to file the appeal. Other risk involved are usually related to the adopted child’s psychological issues resulting from past experiences.

Private VS Agency Adoptions

So what’s the difference in an independent adoptions and an agency adoption? An agency adoption is arranged through a licensed adoption agency, and a private or independent adoption is arranged through a private party. In agency adoptions the birth-parents relinquish their parental rights to the agency and then the agency locates a family for the child. In a private adoption the birth-parents relinquish their parental rights to the adoptive parents. It’s not quite that simple though; there are different types of agency adoptions and private adoptions. The confusing term “private adoption agency” is often used. So, it’s private yet still an agency? Well, it’s actually an agency adoption. Agency adoptions can be done through local public agencies or licensed private agencies. Private adoptions can be arranged as either an identified adoption, an adoption through an attorney, or an adoption by an unlicensed adoption facilitators. State laws vary regarding agency and private adoptions. Currently 46 states allow private adoptions. No matter which you choose it is important to choose the right agency, attorney, or facilitator. If things aren’t done correctly there’s more possibilities that the adoption can later be revoked. It is also important to verify information to avoid the wide array of adoptions scams out there.

The average total costs of a domestic agency adoption can range from $20,000 to $40,000, comparatively, the cost of private adoptions can be very unpredictable and total expenses can average as high as $35,000. (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012)

If the family chooses to adopt an infant domestically they may prefer a private adoption due to the availability, but should consider all of the involved risk associated. At least half of domestic newborn adoptions are private adoptions. (Gilman & Freivalds, 2012) International adoptions are generally conducted by private, nonprofit adoption agencies and foster adoptions are conducted by local public agencies.

Earlier the term “identified adoption” was mention as an alternative to an open or closed adoption. An identified adoption can also be an alternative when it comes to choosing a private adoption or an agency adoption. With an identified adoption the birth parents will choose the adoptive family, but then may use an agency for other services during the adoption process.

Conclusion

As you can see there are a lot of decisions to make when planning an adoption and these are just the basics. You will be getting a new child which, like having a new baby, opens up a new
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world full of decisions and responsibilities. There are so many things to consider, so be prepared and don’t let yourself become overwhelmed. It will be worth it in the end.
References: